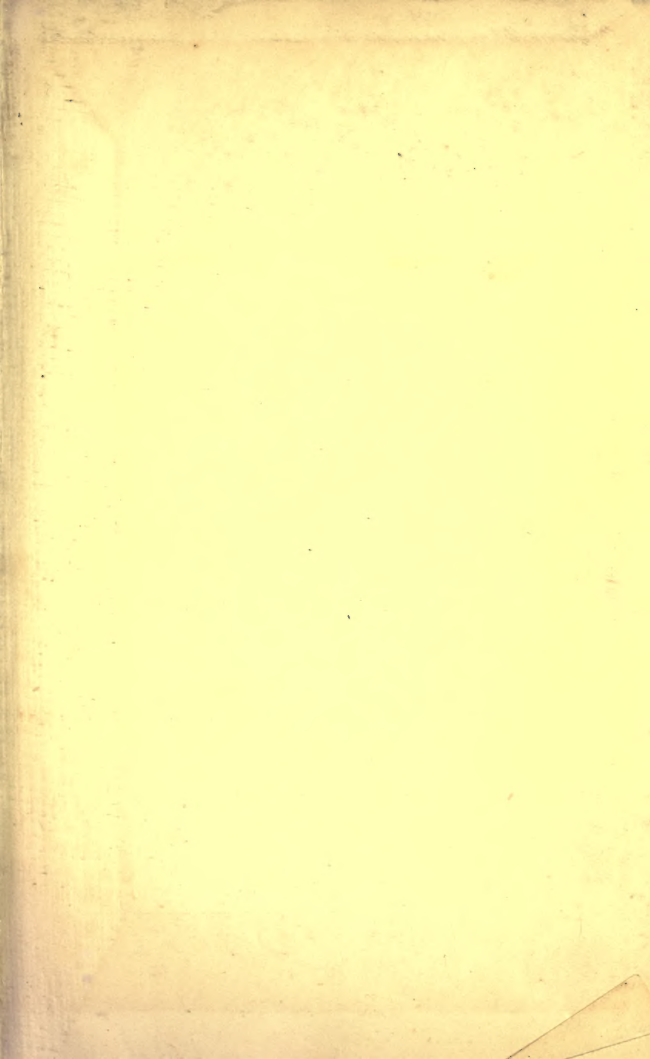


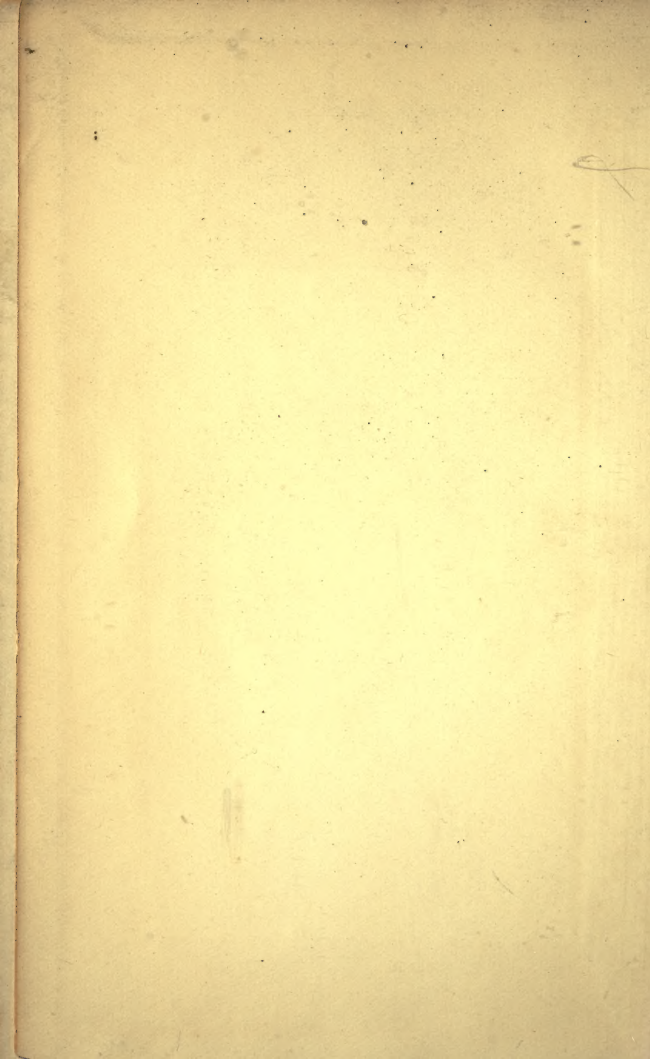


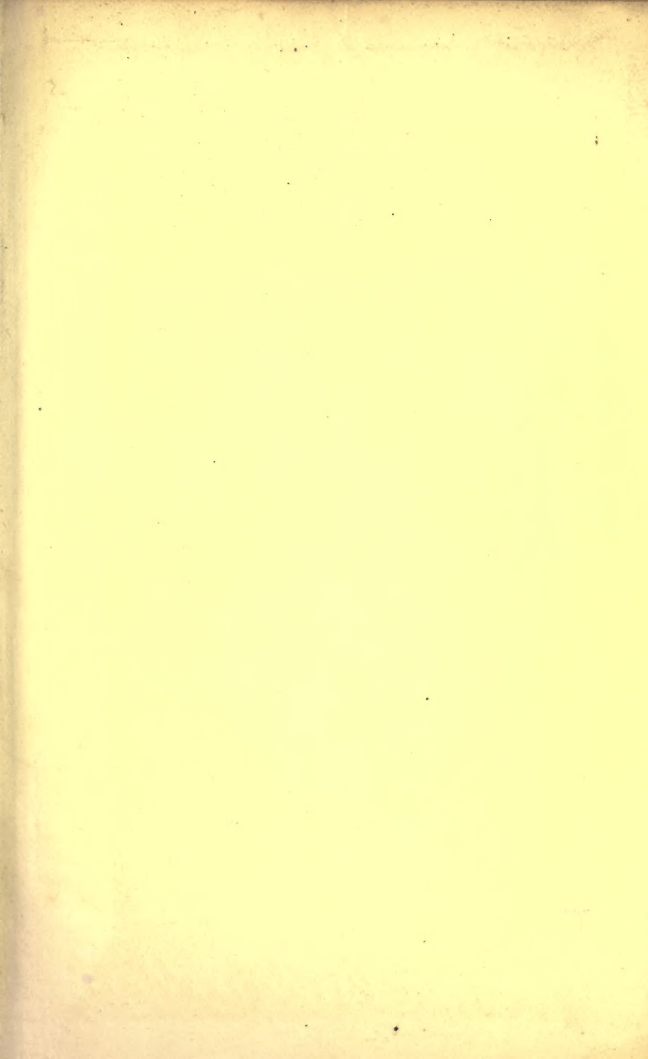
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William Morris

The Poets and the Poetry of the
Nineteenth Century

William Morris

to

Robert Buchanan

Edited by

ALFRED H. MILES



LONDON

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1905

In the prefatory note to the second edition of this work (1896) the Editor invited criticism with a view to the improvement of future editions. Several critics responded to this appeal, and their valuable suggestions have been considered in preparing this re-issue. In some cases the text has been revised and the selection varied; in others, additions have been made to complete the representation. The biographical and bibliographical matter has been brought up to date.—A. H. M.

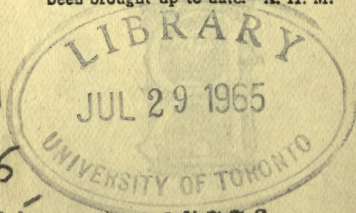
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PREFATORY.

SINCE the publication of the first edition of this volume several writers, whose work occupies considerable space in its pages, have been removed from human activities by the hand of death. The Hon. Roden Noel and Mr. John Addington Symonds were in a very practical sense united in life; in death they are not divided. Lord de Tabley, public interest in whose work was in some measure revived by the former edition of this volume, and Mr. James Ashcroft Noble, two of whose articles enrich its pages, have also passed away. Such alterations and additions as were deemed necessary in view of these losses were made in the second edition of this volume, which was published in 1896. Since that issue, Mr. William Morris, Mr. Cosmo Monkhouse, and Mr. Robert Buchanan have laid aside the pen. It has been thought unnecessary to vary the selections originally given of their works. By the kindness of Mr. Theodore Watts-Dunton, changes have been made in the representation of his verse. For the rest, except that the work throughout has been brought up to date, the volume remains identical with the first edition.

The editor desires to express his thanks to the many poets represented for the favours whereby their poems are included in this volume.

Grateful reference is also due to the kindness of the several firms of publishers whose books are so largely represented. Messrs. Reeves & Turner, the

publishers of Mr. William Morris' works; Messrs. Kegan Paul & Co., who publish the several volumes of the Hon. Roden Noel, Mr. Austin Dobson, and Mr. W. S. Blunt; Messrs. Bell & Sons, who hold the copyrights of the works of the late Thomas Ashe; Messrs. Smith & Elder, the publishers of the works of Mr. John Addington Symonds; Messrs. Macmillan, who publish the poems of Mr. Alfred Austin; Messrs. Chatto & Windus, who publish Mr. Swinburne's works, as well as those of Mr. Robert Buchanan; Mr. Elkin Matthews, the publisher of Mr. Cosmo Monkhouse's "Corn and Poppies," and Mr. John Lane, the publisher of Lord de Tabley's "Poems, Dramatic and Lyrical." A. H. M.

INDEX.

	PAGE
WILLIAM MORRIS (1834—1896) <i>H. Buxton Forman</i>	1
SHAMEFUL DEATH	15
THE EVE OF CRECY	17
THE HAYSTACK IN THE FLOODS	19
SIR PETER HARPDON'S END (Scenes II. and III.) .	25
THE EARTHLY PARADISE—	
i. An Apology	33
ii. Atalanta's Race	35
LOVE IS ENOUGH—	
i. The First Lyric	60
ii. The Concluding Lyric	60
THE STORY OF SIGURD THE VOLSUNG—	
"Then in the grave-mound's darkness" . . .	62
CHANTS FOR SOCIALISTS—	
The March of the Workers	69
A Death Song	72
THE HOUSE OF THE WOLFINGS—	
The Tale of the Hauberk	73
THE ROOTS OF THE MOUNTAINS—	
i. Song: "In hay-tide"	77
ii. A Lay of Time past	78
HON. RODEN NOEL (1834—1894)	
<i>J. Addington Symonds</i>	81
A VISION OF THE DESERT	89
THE WATERNYMPH AND THE BOY	97
A LITTLE CHILD'S MONUMENT—	
i. Lament	104
ii. The King and the Peasant	105
iii. Music and the Child	107
iv. "That they all may be one"	113

LOVE LYRICS—	PAGE
I. "The Pity of It"	114
II. Early Love	115
III. Love Hiding	117
LONDON (from "A Lay of Civilisation")	118
BEETHOVEN	123
THALATTA	126
BYRON'S GRAVE	135
THE MODERN FAUST—	
I. Pan	137
II. Ragnarok (a selection)	145
ALFRED AUSTIN (1835) <i>Walter Whyte</i>	147
A NIGHT IN JUNE	151
PRIMROSES	153
THE LAST NIGHT	157
THE LAST REDOUBT	161
SONNETS—	
I. Love's Blindness	164
II. Love's Wisdom	164
RICHARD GARNETT (1835) <i>Cosmo Monkhouse</i>	165
(<i>William Shakespeare, Pedagogue and Poacher</i>)	166
POEMS—	
I. A Nocturn	169
II. Fading-leaf and Falling-leaf	169
III. The Ballad of the Boat	170
IV. The Violet to the Nightingale	172
V. The Diver's Story :	173
VI. The Sea of Soul	174
VII. Even-Star	176
VIII. Epigrams	177
IX. The Sicilian Octave	178
SONNETS—	
I. Age	179
II. Dante	179
III. Justice	180
IV. The Sands of Time	180
IPHIGENIA IN DELPHI (a selection)	181

	PAGE
LORD DE TABLEY (1835—1895) <i>Alfred H. Miles</i>	183
SHORTER POEMS—	
I. The Pilgrim Cranes	187
II. Daffodils	187
III. A Frosty Day	188
IV. The Knight in the Wood	189
V. Misrepresentation	190
VI. Nuptial Song	190
VII. Retrospect	191
VIII. The Study of a Spider	193
IX. A Winter Sketch	195
X. The Windmill	196
DAPHNE	198
A HYMN TO APHRODITE	201
THE CHURCHYARD ON THE SANDS	203
AN ODE	207
JAEL	210
THOMAS ASHE (1836—1889) <i>Havelock Ellis</i>	219
EARLIER POEMS—	
I. Ettie	225
II. Avice Ethel	228
III. Sympathy	230
PICTURES OF PSYCHE (III.—VI.)	231
LATER POEMS—	
I. Aæde	241
II. No and Yes	244
III. Lost Eros	245
IV. To Two Bereaved	246
V. Apologia	246
MARIT—	
<i>C'est un songe que d'y penser</i>	247
AT ALTENAU—	
Meet we no Angels, Pansie?	248
BETTWS-Y-COED—	
Chide not the Poet	249
LONDON LYRICS—	
I. Prologue	251
II. A Vision of Children	251
III. The City Clerk	252
IV. A Machine Hand	253
V. Old Jane	253
VI. Epilogue	254

THEODORE WATTS-DUNTON (1836)		PAGE
	<i>Mackenzie Bell</i>	255
SONNETS—		
	(<i>The Rosy Scar</i>) :	258
	(<i>The Three Fausts</i>) :	259
SELECTIONS FROM "THE COMING OF LOVE"—		
I.	Mother Carey's Chicken	263
II.	Wassail Chorus at the Mermaid Tavern	267
III.	The Dukkeripen	270
SONNETS FROM "THE COMING OF LOVE"—		
I.	Natura Maligna	272
II.	Natura Benigna	272
III.	A Starry Night at Sea	273
IV.	The First Kiss	273
V.	The Heaven that was	274
VI.	A Dream	274
VII.	John the Pilgrim	275
VIII.	Dickens returns on Christmas Day	275
IX.	The Christmas Tree	276
X.	Coleridge	276
XI., XII., XIII.	The Last Waltz	277
XIV., XV., XVI.	Two Letters. (To a Friend).	278
OTHER SONNETS—		
I.	The Shadow on the Window Blind	280
II.	Australia's Mother	280
ALGERNON CHARLES SWINBURNE (1837)		
	<i>Arthur Symonds</i>	281
ATALANTA IN CALYDON—		
I.	Chorus: When the Hounds of Spring :	289
II.	Chorus: Before the Beginning of Years	291
POEMS AND BALLADS—		
I.	Hymn to Proserpine	293
II.	Itylus	300
III.	The Garden of Proserpine	302
SONGS BEFORE SUNRISE—		
	Super Flumina Babylonis	305
ERECHTHEUS—		
	Storm and Battle	311
POEMS AND BALLADS (Second Series)—		
I.	Winter in Northumberland	319
II.	A Forsaken Garden	328
III.	Ex-Voto	331
IV.	At Parting	335
A MIDSUMMER HOLIDAY—		
	On the Verge	336

TRISTRAM OF LYONESSE—	PAGE
I. Dedicatory Sonnet	339
II. Selection from "The Sailing of the Swallow"	340
III. Selection from "The Maiden Marriage"	341
IV. Selection from "The Last Pilgrimage"	344
HERSE	349
SONNET: "Hope and Fear"	352
A CENTURY OF ROUNDELS—	
I. To Catullus	353
II. In Guernsey	353
DAVID GRAY (1838—1861) . <i>James Ashcroft Noble</i>	355
EMPEDOCLES	357
THE LUGGIE—	
Winter (a selection)	361
THE YELLOWHAMMER	365
OCTOBER (a selection)	367
THE HAREBELL	368
IN THE SHADOWS—	
Sonnets I., II., and III.	369
MY EPITAPH	370
HERMANCHARLES MERIVALE (1839) <i>J. A. Blaikie</i>	371
THE WHITE PILGRIM—	
The Speech of Death	375
SONNETS—	
I. The Sunset Winter.	378
II. Thaisa's Dirge	378
ÆTATE XIX.	379
OLD AND NEW ROME	381
"ACROSS THE ESTUARY"	387
A LOST MORNING	389
AUSTIN DOBSON (1840) . . <i>Alfred H. Miles</i>	391
OLD-WORLD IDYLLS—	
I. A Dead Letter	395
II. The Ballad of "Beau Brocade"	400
PROVERBS IN PORCELAIN—	
"Good Night, Babette"	408

VIGNETTES IN RHYME—	PAGE
The Idyll of the Carp	411
AT THE SIGN OF THE LYRE—	
A Fancy from Fontenelle	416
MISCELLANEOUS POEMS—	
I. A Song of the Four Seasons	417
II. The Paradox of Time	418
III. To a Greek Girl	419
FABLES OF LITERATURE AND ART—	
The Poet and the Critics	421
ESSAYS IN OLD FRENCH FORMS—	
A Ballad of Prose and Rhyme	423
" In After Days "	424
WILFRID SCAWEN BLUNT (1840)	
<i>Richard le Gallienne</i>	425
SONNETS AND SONGS—	
I. In the Night	431
II. Sonnets—The Sublime	434
III. At a Funeral	435
THE LOVE-SONNETS OF PROTEUS—	
I. To Manon, comparing Her to a Falcon	439
II. To Juliet, exhorting Her to Patience	439
III. Farewell to Juliet: "Lame, Impotent Con- clusion"	440
IV. Farewell to Juliet: "Farewell, then"	440
V. Laughter and Death	441
VI. On the Shortness of Time	441
IN VINCULIS—	
SONNETS	
I. "From Caiaphas to Pilate I was sent"	442
II. "There are two voices with me in the night"	442
III. "My prison has its pleasures"	443
IV. "Farewell, dark gaol"	443
A NEW PILGRIMAGE—	
SONNETS	
I. "Ah Paris, Paris!"	444
II. "To-day there is no cloud upon thy face"	444
III. "For thus it is. You flout at kings to-day"	445
IV. "Gods, what a moral! Yet in vain I jest"	445
V. "How strangely now I come, a man of sorrow"	446

THE IDLER'S CALENDAR—	PAGE
I. April	447
II. November	448
FROM THE ARABIC—	
The Camel-Rider	449
COSMO MONKHOUSE (1840—1901) <i>R. le Gallienne</i>	453
THE CHIEF RINGER'S BURIAL	455
THE NIGHT EXPRESS	457
POSTHUMOUS	460
ANY SOUL TO ANY BODY	461
HER FACE	463
A DEAD MARCH	467
UNDER THE OAK	470
TO A NEW-BORN CHILD	473
A SONG OF THE SEASONS	475
TO THE SEA	476
VIOLET	476
JOHN ADDINGTON SYMONDS (1840—1893)	
<i>T. Herbert Warren</i>	477
(<i>A Christmas Carol</i>)	483
THE TEMPTATION IN THE WILDERNESS	485
LE JEUNE HOMME CARESSANT SA CHIMÈRE	486
FOR ONE OF GIAN BELLINI'S LITTLE ANGELS	489
LYRICS OF LIFE—	
I. "Back to thy Books"	490
II. "Give freely to the Friend thou hast"	491
III. After Tempest	492
LYRICS OF LIFE AND ART—	
I. Love in Dreams	493
II. Farewell	493
III. In Dreamland	494
IV. Lebens Philosophie	495
AN IMPROVISATION ON THE VIOLIN	497
POEMS ON GREEK THEMES—	
I. The Sacrifice	501
II. Art is Love	502

THE LOVE TALE OF ODATIS—	PAGE
The Dream of Odatis	506
AMONG THE MOUNTAINS—	
The Crocus and the Soldanella	509
SONNETS—	
Winter Nights in the High Alps, I. st	512
Winter Nights in the High Alps, II.	512
Winter Nights in the High Alps, III.	513
Winter Nights in the High Alps, IV.	513
MISCELLANEOUS—	
I. The Grave of Omar Khayyam	514
II. A Sister of the Poor	514
III. O si, O si, Otiosi	515
IV. To Prometheus	515
V. The Chorister	516
VI. A Dream of Burial in Mid-Ocean	516
ROBERT BUCHANAN (1841—1901)	<i>J. A. Noble</i> 517
IDYLS AND LEGENDS OF INVERBURN—	
The Dead Mother	527
LONDON POEMS—	
I. Artist and Model	531
II. Nell	537
III. Tiger Bay	543
NORTH COAST, AND OTHER POEMS—	
The Battle of Drumliemoor	549
THE BOOK OF ORM—	
I. The Dream of the World without Death	554
II. Roses	561
MISCELLANEOUS POEMS AND BALLADS—	
I. The Lights of Leith	563
II. The Wedding of Shon Maclean	575
III. The Ballad of Judas Iscariot	583
IV. The Faëry Reaper	590

William Morris.

1834—1896.

WILLIAM MORRIS was born at Walthamstow on the 24th of March, 1834, and died at Hammersmith on the 3rd of October, 1896. He was educated at Marlborough and at Exeter College, Oxford; and in 1856 he was articled to the late George Edmund Street, the architect. His early sympathies with what is noblest in architecture may be traced in his literary work of this period, preserved in a remarkable periodical in which he was associated with several brilliant young contemporaries. *The Oxford and Cambridge Magazine*, founded, and supported so far as funds are concerned, by Morris, was also largely indebted to his pen for its contents; and it was during the year 1856, in which its twelve numbers appeared, that he made a solid start in literature. The magazine contains poems of his, critical papers, and a series of notable prose stories. It is in some of these that he showed, in a dreamy and sensitive way, the keen sympathy with the craftsmen of the middle ages that in later years led him into the eager polemics of that practical undertaking, the Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings,—dreaded, though not yet sufficiently dreaded, by the destructive Philistine. Those early stories, though crude in form, bear unmistakable marks of genius; and no man of judgment reading them as the work of a youth of one or two and

twenty could hesitate to predict for that youth a literary career of no ordinary kind. But if these romantic tales, one of which is so recklessly fanciful as to make a dead man the chronicler of his own experiences, were sound material for prophesying good concerning Morris, still more so was his first volume of poetry, "*The Defence of Guenevere and other Poems*," issued in 1858. Here the life of our medieval ancestors is depicted with a sympathy and insight perhaps unparalleled. The reading of Froissart and Monstrelet has stirred to its depths a receptive artist-nature of the rarest kind; and a strength of hand equal to that receptiveness has produced at the age of twenty-four work that must stand or fall with English literature. "*Sir Peter Harpdon's End*," "*The Haystack in the Floods*," "*Shameful Death*," and other pieces in the volume, would be known anywhere as the work of a master. Some poems in the book are immature in craftsmanship; but not one shows defective intuition.

Morris did not remain with Street for the full term of his articles, but made a practical start in a less restricted line than that of architecture. Before he had established himself in literature with the public as distinguished from the few "who know," he had taken the leading part in founding an undertaking then deemed to be somewhat quixotic, but none the less destined to be an important factor in the developement of English taste. It was the author of "*The Defence of Guenevere*" whose name figured in the style of the firm of fine-art decorators, Morris, Marshall, Faulkner & Co., who began nearly a quarter of a century ago an attempt to reform English taste and make people furnish and

decorate their abodes with things beautiful instead of things hideous. This enterprise, now long conducted under the poet's name only, may fairly claim the principal place among the agencies which have brought about a great and favourable change in the style of our domestic decoration and in our taste for colour. The so-called æsthetic movement has been a mere bastard off-shoot of this genuine reform; but the reform itself is still going on steadily, notwithstanding the transient reflected ridicule which it incurred through the *gauche* eccentricities of its by-blow. Those who remember the arrival from Paris of the fine colours (since nick-named "æsthetic"), which superseded in women's attire the crude horrors affected by the last generation, may be pleased to doubt the credit given above to Morris in this matter. Nevertheless, the truth is that the French milliners, who sent those colours hither to our women, got them from Morris's upholstery stuffs.

The year 1867 must be set down as that in which Morris established himself with the public as a poet who had mastered the tale-teller's craft. In that year appeared "The Life and Death of Jason," a narrative poem in seventeen books, written in five-foot iambic couplets of the Chaucerian model, as distinguished from the Waller-Dryden-Pope distich. Indeed, Chaucer was the acknowledged master of Morris at this time, and is recalled to the reader's recollection in the next work, "The Earthly Paradise," of which the first instalment appeared in 1868, and the last in 1870. In that treasure-house of lovely tales, with lyric interludes, distinguished by their manliness and sincerity from the introspec-

tive mosaics of the day, the stock metres, three in number, derive from Chaucer, while the tales themselves are of various origin—mainly Greek or Northern, but drawn occasionally, either directly or indirectly, from the East. While "The Earthly Paradise" was in progress, Morris was becoming deep in Icelandic literature. From this he not only derived the magnificent tragic story of "The Lovers of Gudrun," in which "The Earthly Paradise" sounds its deepest notes, and soars highest, but he also enriched our literature with prose versions of several of the sagas, being assisted by Mr. Eiríkr Magnússon. "The Story of Grettir the Strong," published in 1869, represents the ruder domestic sagas of the tenth century. "The Story of the Volsungs and Niblungs," issued in the following year, represents the primeval mythic literature of the race. The two shorter sagas of "Frithiof the Bold" and "Gunnlaug the Wormtongue" are admirable samples of Icelandic legend and domestic romance. The translations were executed near about the same period as the two large works, and appeared in periodicals—that of Gunnlaug in *The Fortnightly Review* for January 1, 1869, and that of Frithiof in the *The Dark Blue Magazine* for March and April 1871. All these works are interspersed with snatches of scaldic song in the alliterative measures of the Icelanders; and with the version of "Volsunga" Morris gave a considerable number of the songs of the Elder Edda. The first independent original fruit borne by this revelling in the forthright, simple, manly, and most craftsmanlike narratives of the hardy Norsemen who peopled Iceland, was the poem entitled "Love is Enough; or, the Freeing

of Pharamond : a Morality." Here Morris employed alliterative metre in a truly masterly manner for the shaping of one of the most noteworthy poems of the third quarter of the century. This came out in 1873; and, though something above the heads of the large public to which "The Earthly Paradise" appeals, it widened the poet's credit with the critical few. Two years later the sagas of Frithiof and Gunnlaug were reprinted, with that of Viglund the Fair, and some shorter Icelandic tales, under the title of "Three Northern Love Stories," etc. In 1876 Morris issued "The Æneids of Virgil done into English Verse." The verse chosen was the ballad metre employed by Chapman in translating the Iliad. If the service of the modern poet to Virgil is not in all respects better than that of the Elizabethan to Homer, this latter-day Æneid is at least of a more equable quality, of a finer taste in language, and much more literal than Chapman's Iliad. It is a translation, not a mere paraphrase; and the metre is handled in the noblest manner. A single sample, the opening of Book x., must illustrate:—

"Meanwhile is opened wide the door of dread Olympus'
 walls,
 And there the Sire of Gods and Men unto the council calls,
 Amid the starry place, wherefrom, high-throned he looks
 adown
 Upon the folk of Latin land and that beleaguered town."

There is a fidelity to the original here which we seek in vain in such charming couplets of Chapman as these from the opening of Book viii.—

"The cheerful lady of the light, deck'd in her saffron robe,
 Dispersed her beams through every part of this enflowered
 globe,

When thundering Jove a court of Gods assembled by his
will,
In top of all the topful heights, that crown th' Olympian
hill."—

which can hardly be held to render closely what is literally translated thus by Messrs Lang, Leaf and Myers:—"Now Dawn the saffron-robed was spreading over all the earth, and Zeus whose joy is in the thunder let call an assembly of the gods upon the topmost peak of many-ridged Olympus."

Up to this point Morris might almost be said to have been frankly medieval in his way of looking at things. His spiritual birth into his own century is to be found recorded in his next substantive work, "The Story of Sigurd the Volsung, and the Fall of the Niblungs." Here not only does he fill a large canvas with an art higher and subtler than that shown in "Jason," or even in "The Earthly Paradise," but he betrays a profound concern in the destinies of the race, such as we do not exact from the mere story-teller. Love and adventure he had already treated in a manner approaching perfection; and a sympathetic intelligence of all beautiful legends breathes throughout his works; but Sigurd is something more than a lover and a warrior: he is at once heroic and tragic; and he is surrounded by characters heroic and tragic. In his mythic person large spiritual questions are suggested; he is the typical saviour as conceived by the Northern race; and this side of the conception is more emphatic and unmistakable in the modern work than in the "Volsunga Saga," which is the basis of this great poem. In structure, in metre, and in the adoption of the Icelandic system of imagery into our tongue,

"Sigurd the Volsung" is superb. But the genius of the poet is still more evident in the convincingly right conception of all the characters and of the tragic import of their relations one to another,—perhaps more than all in the unflinching truth to the savage primeval conception of the incestuous Signy. The real Signy stands in splendid and immortal contrast with her debased counterpart Sieglinde in Wagner's great poem "*Der Ring des Nibelungen*." The crime of Sieglinde is self-seeking, and that of her brother Siegmund conscious; the crime of the real Signy is swallowed up in the tremendous self-renunciation of which it is a part, and the crime of the real Sigmund is unconscious. It is to the unerring rectitude and absolute sanity of Morris's genius that we owe the good hap of this strict adherence to the original mythos in these particulars.

In dealing as none but a modern could have dealt with the greatest myth of our Northern race, Morris, perhaps unconsciously, celebrated what has been called above his spiritual birth into his own century. "Dreamer of dreams, born out of my due time," was never a wholly true description; but, from the time of Sigurd's "coming into the tale" of the poet's life, his renunciation of the attempt to "set the crooked straight" became specifically inapt. Commencing with an art-propaganda which aimed at the reform of the decorative arts, he gradually slid into social questions of the deepest concern to all men, learned and unlearned. He found the cause of artistic degradation in the rotten commercial foundations of our whole social scheme; and from that time forth his efforts have tended towards root and branch social reform.

It is needless to criticize a series of social and political tracts and articles of which many would be ephemeral but for their authorship; but it may usefully be recorded that, in the years 1878 to 1887, Morris issued "The Decorative Arts—their Relation to Modern Life and Progress—an Address" (February 1878), a presidential address to the Birmingham Society of Arts (February 1879), "Labour and Pleasure *versus* Labour and Sorrow" (a second presidential address—February 1880), a reprint of these three, with two other lectures, under the general title "Hopes and Fears for Art" (1882), "Art and Socialism, a Lecture" (1884), an introduction to Sketchley's "Review of European Society" (1884), "A Summary of the Principles of Socialism written for the Democratic Federation" (conjointly with H. M. Hyndman, 1884), "Chants for Socialists" (1885), the Manifesto of the Socialist League (1885), "For Whom shall we Vote?" (1885), "Useful Work *versus* Useless Toil" (1885), "The Labour Question from the Socialist Standpoint" (1886), "A Short Account of the Commune of Paris" (conjointly with E. Belfort Bax and Victor Dave, 1886), "Socialism, a Lecture" (broadside of eight columns, 1886), "The Tables Turned; or, Nupkins Awakened: a Socialist Interlude, as for the First Time Played at the Hall of the Socialist League on Saturday, October 15th, 1887," "The Aims of Art" (1887), and "A Death Song" (for Alfred Linnell, killed in Trafalgar Square, November 20, 1887). This record of bare facts for the years in question would be incomplete without a mention of *The Commonweal*, the organ of the Socialist League, established under Morris's editorship and with his financial support at

the beginning of 1885, as a monthly sheet, but carried on as a weekly newspaper from May-day 1886 until after he gave up the editorship in 1890. The pages of this print teem with Morris's manly and outspoken attacks on commercialism,—attacks delivered in a cause from the success of which he has personally all to lose and nothing to gain. There are also in *The Commonweal* many productions of his pen that are anything but ephemeral. From the list of pamphlets must be taken as of special and independent literary interest, apart from the Socialist propaganda, "Chants for Socialists," "The Tables Turned," and the "Death Song"; but a far higher effort than these is the poem of modern life called "The Pilgrims of Hope," which lies buried in the first two volumes of *The Commonweal*. That poem, written in the great manner of "Sigurd the Volsung," and mainly in the same metre, is ostensibly a complete treatment of a modern Socialist subject, and runs to over 1,300 lines. The poet has kept it by him instead of reprinting it, doubtless to render it more perfect in form; but whether he does so or not, the poem will eventually rank among his leading works, and is likely to remain, for another generation of English readers, the most remarkable thing in the literature of the Socialist movement among us.

"The Odyssey of Homer done into English Verse," put forth in 1887, was something of an astonishment for those who knew of the various claims on the poet's time and energy. It is as literal as his version of the *Æneid*, and even finer in metric qualities, the verse being once more the anapæstic couplet of "Sigurd the Volsung," which Morris has made

peculiarly his own. It may be doubted whether these renderings of Virgil and Homer do not stand alone as being at once faithful to the sense of the originals, and poetic literature of the first class. In the following year (1888) he issued a further Socialist pamphlet, "True and False Society," and accomplished a very novel piece of purely literary propagandism under the title "A Dream of John Ball": the poet in a dream sees something of Jack Straw's rebellion, and discusses at large with the revolutionary ecclesiastic of that period, John Ball, the future of labour in England, culminating in the effacement of genuine handicraft by machinery under the commercial system. This fine prose work, which first appeared from week to week in *The Commonwealth*, was reprinted as a book, with a story of kindred interest called "A King's Lesson," in 1888. In the same year the poet took an active part in the establishment of the Arts and Crafts Exhibition Society, in whose catalogues there are technical essays from his pen; and he published, under the general title "Signs of Change," a collection of his social and artistic lectures, old and new.

The year 1889 had a fresh surprise in store, to wit a wholly new thing in English prose fiction. "A Tale of the House of the Wolfings and all the Kindreds of the Mark, written in prose and in verse by William Morris," is a story of the tribal period of the Goths. The Mark is the name given to a series of clearings in a vast forest, peopled by certain tribes of Goths. Neither period nor place is specified. Perhaps it will be safe to regard the dealings of the Goths and Romans here depicted as proper to the fourth century, the historical event of which a re-

flexion in small may be detected being the overthrow of the Romans under Valens by the Goths; and, as Mirkwood water, the river running through the Mark, flows northward, it may perhaps be regarded as some feeder of the Danube. In dealing with this early period, it is fitting that myth should mingle with matter-of-fact. The secret union of the hero Thiodolf, the head of the House of the Wolfings, with a daughter of Odin, a Chooser of the Slain, by name the Wood-Sun, is treated with great dignity; and their daughter the Hall-Sun, the virgin guardian of the sacred lamp of that name, that hangs in the Wolfing Hall, is a character of heroic mould. The material part of the story is an attempt of a large body of Romans to possess themselves of the Mark, and their overthrow and annihilation by the Mark-men: the romantic motive running through the book is a hauberk myth nobler in conception even than the hauberk myth of "the golden Sigurd," who so often for reasons good in his dealings with the varied evils that infested the earth

"did on the Helm of Aweing, and the Hauberk all of
gold,
Whose like is not in the heavens nor has earth of its
fellow told."

The hauberk bestowed by the Wood-Sun upon Thiodolf, with a lying assurance that no "evil weird" hung to it, was got by fraud from a dwarf, whose curse it bore, together with its own unchangeable virtue. That curse was that, though the shirt of mail should save the wearer, it should wreck his folk; and it is Thiodolf's great renunciation of the hauberk, and with it of the Wood-Sun and life, that gives to his death in his people's victory the quality of a sorrow swal-

lowed up in splendour; while the devoted isolation of the Hall-Sun, whose influence brings all this to pass, makes her continued existence more tragic than her father's death. The book has little in common with anything more modern than the great Icelandic sagas, most of which it excels in grandeur of conception, in beauty of form, and in subtlety of transition from prose to verse. The metrical passages in which the book abounds are reserved for the more exalted and emotional phases of the dialogue, and reach the highest level of "Sigurd the Volsung."

This great work was followed late in the same year by "The Roots of the Mountains, wherein is told somewhat of the Lives of the Men of Burgdale, their Friends, their Neighbours, their Foemen and their Fellows in Arms." The subject is akin to that of "The House of the Wolfings;" but the period is considerably later, the Goths having passed from the tribal state to that of village communities, though retaining some of the noble primitive institutions of the tribal state as described by the poet. Here again the motive is defence of the land against invasion; but in this case, the "dusky men," whom the Burgdalers combine with a remnant of the Wolfings to overthrow, may be taken to be of Hunnish race. Their anti-human institutions leave but little room for horror at their extermination like vermin. In laying out, "The Roots of the Mountains" is no whit inferior to "The House of the Wolfings." It is, naturally, less poetically exalted, the epoch being too late for fact longer to mingle with myth. On the other hand, there is the compensating advantage of a very human love-motive treated with perfect sympathy and masculine vigour, while the numerous

characters are the more lifelike for their less remoteness. For consistency of delineation these men and women leave nothing to desire; for realization of place, personality, costume, and institution, the work is unsurpassed; and in the one matter which in this case is very important, the invention of battle incident, Homer himself could not afford to give the modern poet points.

Since these two books were issued, Morris has published a Socialist pamphlet called "Monopoly" (1890), and, in *The English Illustrated Magazine*, another prose romance of a legendary character called "The Glittering Plain; or, the Land of Living Men." Though characterized by all the force of handling of Morris's later years, this piece, by treating of the renewal of youth without death, as a thing actually accomplished in the tale, recalls to the mind the dreamy period of Morris's own poetic youth. He has also, in conjunction with Mr. Magnússon, entered upon a great undertaking in the way of translation from the Icelandic: of "The Saga Library" one volume is already published (1891): it contains three sagas, "The Story of Howard the Halt," "The Story of the Banded Men," and "The Story of Hen Thorir;" and these are to be followed by most of the great Icelandic sagas, including those of which the translations have been already mentioned. In an original work published in *The Commonwealth*, but not yet issued with the author's final revisions, Morris has shown how an artist would have dealt with a theme cognate to that of Mr. Bellamy's "Looking Backward." "News from Nowhere; or, an Epoch of Rest, being some Chapters from an Utopian Romance," gives us a picture of English society as it might be after the

Socialist revolution to which the propaganda tends. The account given by an antiquary of the way in which the revolution came about is admirable ; but finer still is the description of the renovated Thames country from Hammersmith to Kelmscott ; and perhaps most precious of all the portrait of the ideal woman Ellen, who joins the poet and his companions on the dream-journey at Runnymede, and fades so cruelly out of our sight with the rest of the splendid vision when he awakes in "dingy Hammersmith," and realizes that he has dreamed.

This last romance has the same superlative merit as Morris's other mature works whether in verse or in prose. He sees things with absolute clearness, and has power to make others see them also. In a large proportion of his work the wider life of old times drew his gaze irresistibly ; and the contemplation made him somewhat sorrowful. He has mixed for many years now in the affairs of modern life, and has realized more than ever the awful contrast between misery and happiness. But his writing is no longer that of one without hope for his fellows ; and reasonable hope begets tenfold desire. His latter books depict states of society in which happiness is possible to every man, even though the happiness be but that of dying for the general good. The worst his enemies can say of him is that he has passed from one beautiful dream to another—from a dream of the golden mythical past to a dream of the golden possible future.

H. BUXTON FORMAN.

William Morris died on the 3rd of October, 1896.

SHAMEFUL DEATH.

WILLIAM MORRIS.

THERE were four of us about that bed ;
The mass-priest knelt at the side,
I and his mother stood at the head,
Over his feet lay the bride ;
We were quite sure that he was dead,
Though his eyes were open wide.

He did not die in the night,
He did not die in the day,
But in the morning twilight
His spirit pass'd away,
When neither sun nor moon was bright,
And the trees were merely grey.

He was not slain with the sword,
Knight's axe, or the knightly spear,
Yet spoke he never a word
After he came in here ;
I cut away the cord
From the neck of my brother dear.

He did not strike one blow,
For the recreants came behind,
In a place where the hornbeams grow,
A path right hard to find,
For the hornbeam boughs swing so,
That the twilight makes it blind.

They lighted a great torch then,
When his arms were pinion'd fast,
Sir John the knight of the Fen,
Sir Guy of the Dolorous Blast,
With knights threescore and ten,
Hung brave Lord Hugh at last.

I am threescore and ten,
And my hair is all turn'd grey,
But I met Sir John of the Fen
Long ago on a summer day,
And am glad to think of the moment when
I took his life away.

I am threescore and ten,
And my strength is mostly pass'd,
But long ago I and my men,
When the sky was overcast,
And the smoke roll'd over the reeds of the fen,
Slew Guy of the Dolorous Blast.

And now, knights all of you,
I pray you pray for Sir Hugh,
A good knight and a true,
And for Alice, his wife, pray too.

THE EVE OF CREÇY.

WILLIAM MORRIS.

GOLD on her head, and gold on her feet,
And gold where the hems of her kirtle meet,
And a golden girdle round my sweet ;—

Ah ! qu'elle est belle La Marguerite.

Margaret's maids are fair to see,
Freshly dress'd and pleasantly ;
Margaret's hair falls down to her knee ;—

Ah ! qu'elle est belle La Marguerite.

If I were rich I would kiss her feet,
I would kiss the place where the gold hems meet
And the golden girdle round my sweet—

Ah ! qu'elle est belle La Marguerite.

Ah me ! I have never touch'd her hand ;
When the arriere-ban goes through the land,
Six basnets under my pennon stand ;—

Ah ! qu'elle est belle La Marguerite.

And many an one grins under his hood :
"Sir Lambert de Bois, with all his men good,
Has neither food nor firewood ;"—

Ah ! qu'elle est belle La Marguerite.

If I were rich I would kiss her feet,
And the golden girdle of my sweet,
And thereabouts where the gold hems meet ;

Ah ! qu'elle est belle La Marguerite.

Yet even now it is good to think,
While my few poor varlets grumble and drink
In my desolate hall where the fires sink,—

Ah ! qu'elle est belle La Marguerite.

Of Margaret sitting glorious there,
In glory of gold and glory of hair,
And glory of glorious face most fair ;—

Ah ! qu'elle est belle La Marguerite.

Likewise to-night I make good cheer,
Because this battle draweth near :
For what have I to lose or fear ?—

Ah ! qu'elle est belle La Marguerite.

For, look you, my horse is good to prance
A right fair measure in this war-dance,
Before the eyes of Philip of France ;—

Ah ! qu'elle est belle La Marguerite.

And sometime it may hap, perdie,
While my new towers stand up three and three,
And my hall gets painted fair to see—

Ah ! qu'elle est belle La Marguerite—

That folks may say : “ Times change, by the rood,
For Lambert, banneret of the wood,
Has heaps of food and firewood ;—

Ah ! qu'elle est belle La Marguerite ;—

“ And wonderful eyes, too, under the hood
Of a damsel of right noble blood : ”

St. Ives, for Lambert of the Wood !—

Ah ! qu'elle est belle La Marguerite.

THE HAYSTACK IN THE FLOODS.

WILLIAM MORRIS.

HAD she come all the way for this,
To part at last without a kiss ?
Yea, had she borne the dirt and rain
That her own eyes might see him slain
Beside the haystack in the floods ?

Along the dripping leafless woods,
The stirrup touching either shoe,
She rode astride as troopers do ;
With kirtle kilted to her knee,
To which the mud splash'd wretchedly ;
And the wet dripp'd from every tree
Upon her head and heavy hair,
And on her eyelids broad and fair ;
The tears and rain ran down her face.
By fits and starts they rode apace,
And very often was his place
Far off from her ; he had to ride
Ahead, to see what might betide
When the roads cross'd ; and sometimes, when
There rose a murmuring from his men, ..
Had to turn back with promises ;
Ah me ! she had but little ease ;
And often for pure doubt and dread
She sobb'd, made giddy in the head
By the swift riding ; while, for cold,
Her slender fingers scarce could hold

The wet reins ; yea, and scarcely, too,
She felt the foot within her shoe
Against the stirrup : all for this,
To pass at last without a kiss
Beside the haystack in the floods.

For when they near'd that old soak'd hay,
They saw across the only way
That Judas, Godmar, and the three
Red running lions dismally
Grinn'd from his pennon, under which
In one straight line along the ditch,
They counted thirty heads.

So then,
While Robert turn'd round to his men,
She saw at once the wretched end,
And, stooping down, tried hard to rend
Her coif the wrong way from her head,
And hid her eyes ; while Robert said :
" Nay, love, 'tis scarcely two to one,
At Poitiers where we made them run
So fast—why, sweet my love, good cheer,
The Gascon frontier is so near,
Nought after this."

But, " O," she said,
" My God ! my God ! I have to tread
The long way back without you ; then
The court at Paris ; those six men ;
The gratings of the Chatelet ;
The swift Seine on some rainy day
Like this, and people standing by,
And laughing, while my weak hands try

To recollect how strong men swim.
All this, or else a life with him,
For which I should be damned at last,
Would God that this next hour were past ! ”

He answer'd not, but cried his cry,
“ St. George for Marny ! ” cheerily ;
And laid his hand upon her rein.
Alas ! no man of all his train
Gave back that cheery cry again ;
And, while for rage his thumb beat fast
Upon his sword-hilt, some one cast
About his neck a kerchief long,
And bound him.

Then they went along
To Godmar ; who said : “ Now, Jehane,
Your lover's life is on the wane
So fast, that, if this very hour
You yield not as my paramour,
He will not see the rain leave off—
Nay, keep your tongue from gibe and scoff,
Sir Robert, or I slay you now.”

She laid her hand upon her brow,
Then gazed upon the palm, as though
She thought her forehead bled, and—“ No.”
She said, and turn'd her head away,
As there were nothing else to say,
And everything were settled : red
Grew Godmar's face from chin to head :
“ Jehane, on yonder hill there stands
My castle, guarding well my lands :

What hinders me from taking you,
And doing that I list to do
To your fair wilful body, while
Your knight lies dead ?”

A wicked smile
Wrinkled her face, her lips grew thin,
A long way out she thrust her chin :
“ You know that I should strangle you
While you were sleeping ; or bite through
Your throat, by God’s help—ah ! ” she said,
“ Lord Jesus, pity your poor maid !
For in such wise they hem me in,
I cannot choose but sin and sin,
Whatever happens : yet I think
They could not make me eat or drink,
And so should I just reach my rest.”
“ Nay, if you do not my behest,
O Jehane ! though I love you well,”
Said Godmar, “ would I fail to tell
All that I know,” “ Foul lies,” she said.
“ Eh ? lies my Jehane ? by God’s head,
At Paris folks would deem them true !
Do you know, Jehane, they cry for you,
‘ Jehane the brown ! Jehane the brown !
Give us Jehane to burn or drown ! ’—
Eh—gag me, Robert !—sweet my friend,
This were indeed a piteous end
For those long fingers, and long feet,
And long neck, and smooth shoulders sweet ;
An end that few men would forget
That saw it—So, an hour yet :
Consider, Jehane, which to take
Of life or death ! ”

So, scarce awake,
Dismounting, did she leave that place,
And totter some yards : with her face
Turn'd upward to the sky she lay,
Her head on a wet heap of hay,
And fell asleep : and while she slept,
And did not dream, the minutes crept
Round to the twelve again ; but she,
Being waked at last, sigh'd quietly,
And strangely childlike came, and said :
" I will not." Straightway Godmar's head,
As though it hung on strong wires, turn'd
Most sharply round, and his face burn'd.

For Robert—both his eyes were dry,
He could not weep, but gloomily
He seem'd to watch the rain ; yea, too,
His lips were firm ; he tried once more
To touch her lips ; she reach'd out, sore
And vain desire so tortured them,
The poor grey lips, and now the hem
Of his sleeve brush'd them.

With a start
Up Godmar rose, thrust them apart ;
From Robert's throat he loosed the bands
Of silk and mail ; with empty hands
Held out, she stood and gazed, and saw,
The long bright blade without a flaw
Glide out from Godmar's sheath, his hand
In Robert's hair ; she saw him bend
Back Robert's head ; she saw him send
The thin steel down ; the blow told well,
Right backward the knight Robert fell,

And moan'd as dogs do, being half dead,
Unwitting, as I deem : so then
Godmar turn'd grinning to his men,
Who ran, some five or six, and beat
His head to pieces at their feet.

Then Godmar turn'd again and said :
"So, Jehane, the first fitte is read !
Take note, my lady, that your way
Lies backward to the Chatelet !"
She shook her head and gazed awhile
At her cold hands with a rueful smile,
As though this thing had made her mad.

This was the parting that they had
Beside the haystack in the floods.

SIR PETER HARPDON'S END.

WILLIAM MORRIS.

(SCENES II. AND III.)

SCENE II.

*Outside the castle by the great gate ; SIR LAMBERT and
SIR PETER seated ; guards attending each, the rest
of SIR LAMBERT'S men drawn up about a furlong
off.*

SIR PETER.

AND if I choose to take the losing side
Still, does it hurt you ?

SIR LAMBERT.

O ! no hurt to me ;

I see you sneering, " Why take trouble then,
Seeing you love me not ? " look you, our house
(Which, taken altogether, I love much)
Had better be upon the right side now,
If, once for all, it wishes to bear rule
As such a house should : cousin, you're too wise
To feed your hope up fat, that this fair France
Will ever draw two ways again ; this side
The French, wrong-headed, all a-jar
With envious longings ; and the other side
The order'd English, orderly led on
By those two Edwards through all wrong and right,

And muddling right and wrong to a thick broth
With that long stick, their strength. This is all
changed,

The true French win, on either side you have
Cool-headed men, good at a tilting-match,
And good at setting battles in array,
And good at squeezing taxes at due time ;
Therefore by nature we French being here
Upon our own big land—

[SIR PETER *laughs aloud*.

Well Peter ! well !

What makes you laugh ?

SIR PETER.

Hearing you sweat to prove
All this I know so well ; but you have read
The siege of Troy ?

SIR LAMBERT.

O ! yea, I know it well.

SIR PETER.

There ! they were wrong, as wrong as men could be ;
For, as I think, they found it such delight
To see fair Helen going through their town :
Yea, any little common thing she did
(As stooping to pick a flower) seem'd so strange,
So new in its great beauty, that they said ;
“ Here we will keep her living in this town,
Till all burns up together.” And so, fought,
In a mad whirl of knowing they were wrong ;
Yea, they fought well, and ever, like a man
That hangs legs off the ground by both his hands,
Over some great height, did they struggle sore,

Quite sure to slip at last ; wherefore, take note
How almost all men, reading that sad siege,
Hold for the Trojans ; as I did at least,
Thought Hector the best knight a long way :

Now

Why should I not do this thing that I think,
For even when I come to count the gains,
I have them my side : men will talk, you know,
(We talk of Hector, dead so long ago,)
When I am dead, of how this Peter clung
To what he thought the right ; of how he died,
Perchance, at last, doing some desperate deed
Few men would care do now, and this is gain
To me, as ease and money is to you,
Moreover, too, I like the straining game
Of striving well to hold up things that fall ;
So one becomes great ; see you ! in good times
All men live well together, and you, too,
Live dull and happy—happy ? not so quick,
Suppose sharp thoughts begin to burn you up.
Why then, but just to fight as I do now,
A halter round my neck, would be great bliss.
O ! I am well off. [*Aside.*

Talk, and talk, and talk,

I know this man has come to murder me,
And yet I talk still.

SIR LAMBERT.

If your side were right,
You might be, though you lost ; but if I said,
“ You are a traitor, being, as you are,
Born Frenchman.” What are Edwards unto you,
Or Richards ?

SIR PETER.

Nay, hold there, my Lambert, hold !
For fear your zeal should bring you to some harm,
Don't call me traitor.

SIR LAMBERT.

Furthermore, my knight,
Men call you slippery on your losing side,
When at Bordeaux I was ambassador,
I heard them say so, and could scarce say "Nay."

*[He takes hold of something in
his sleeve, and rises,*

SIR PETER, *rising.*

They lied—and you lie, not for the first time.
What have you got there, fumbling up your sleeve,
A stolen purse ?

SIR LAMBERT.

Nay, liar in your teeth !
Dead liar too ; St. Denis and St. Lambert !

[Strikes at SIR PETER with a dagger.

SIR PETER, *striking him flatlings with his axe.*

How thief ! thief ! thief ! so there, fair thief, so there,
St. George Guienne ! glaives for the castellan !
You French, you are but dead, unless you lay
Your spears upon the earth. St. George Guienne !

Well done, John Curzon, how he has them now.

SCENE III.

In the Castle.

JOHN CURZON.

WHAT shall we do with all these prisoners, sir ?

SIR PETER.

Why put them all to ransom, those that can
Pay anything, but not too light though, John,
Seeing we have them on the hip : for those
That have no money, that being certified,
Why turn them out of doors before they spy ;
But bring Sir Lambert guarded unto me.

JOHN CURZON.

I will, fair sir.

[He goes.]

SIR PETER.

I do not wish to kill him,
Although I think I ought ; he shall go mark'd,
By all the saints, though !

Enter LAMBERT guarded.

Now, Sir Lambert, now !

What sort of death do you expect to get,
Being taken this way ?

SIR LAMBERT.

Cousin ! cousin ! think !

I am your own blood ; may God pardon me !
I am not fit to die ; if you knew all,
All I have done since I was young and good.
O ! you would give me yet another chance,

As God would, that I might wash all clear out,
By serving you and Him. Let me go now !
And I will pay you down more golden crowns
Of ransom than the king would !

SIR PETER.

Well, stand back,
And do not touch me ! No, you shall not die,
Nor yet pay ransom. You, John Curzon, cause
Some carpenters to build a scaffold, high,
Outside the gate ; when it is built, sound out
To all good folks, " Come, see a traitor punish'd ! "
Take me my knight, and set him up thereon,
And let the hangman shave his head quite clean,
And cut his ears off close up to the head ;
And cause the minstrels all the while to play
Soft music, and good singing ; for this day
Is my high day of triumph ; is it not,
Sir Lambert ?

SIR LAMBERT.

Ah ! on your own blood,
Own name, you heap this foul disgrace ? you dare,
With hands and fame thus sullied, to go back
And take the lady Alice—

SIR PETER.

Say her name
Again, and you are dead, slain here by me.
Why should I talk with you, I'm master here,
And do not want your schooling ; is it not
My mercy that you are not dangling dead
There in the gateway with a broken neck ?

SIR LAMBERT.

Such mercy ! why not kill me then outright ?
To die is nothing ; but to live that all
May point their fingers ! yea, I'd rather die.

JOHN CURZON.

Why, will it make you any uglier man
To lose your ears ? they're much too big for you,
You ugly Judas !

SIR PETER.

Hold, John ! [To LAMBERT.
That's your choice,

To die, mind ! Then you shall die—Lambert mine,
I thank you now for choosing this so well,
It saves me much perplexity and doubt ;
Perchance an ill deed too, for half I count
This sparing traitors is an ill deed.

Well,
Lambert, die bravely, and we're almost friends.

SIR LAMBERT, *grovelling*.

O God ! this is a fiend and not a man ;
Will some one save me from him ? help, help, help !
I will not die.

SIR PETER.

Why, what is this I see ?
A man who is a knight, and bandied words
So well just now with me, is lying down,
Gone mad for fear like this ! So, so, you thought
You knew the worst, and might say what you pleased.
I should have guess'd this from a man like you.

Eh ! righteous Job would give up skin for skin,
Yea, all a man can have for simple life,
And we talk fine, yea, even a hound like this,
Who needs must know that when he dies, deep hell
Will hold him fast for ever—so fine we talk,
“Would rather die”—all that. Now sir, get up !
And choose again : shall it be head sans ears,
Or trunk sans head ?

John Curzon, pull him up.
What, life then ? go and build the scaffold, John.

Lambert, I hope that never on this earth
We meet again ; that you'll turn out a monk,
And mend the life I give you, so, farewell,
I'm sorry you're a rascal. John, despatch.

THE EARTHLY PARADISE.

1868—1870.

WILLIAM MORRIS.

I.

AN APOLOGY.

OF Heaven or Hell I have no power to sing,
I cannot ease the burden of your fears,
Or make quick-coming death a little thing,
Or bring again the pleasure of past years,
Nor for my words shall ye forget your tears,
Or hope again for aught that I can say,
The idle singer of an empty day.

But rather, when aweary of your mirth,
From full hearts still unsatisfied ye sigh,
And, feeling kindly unto all the earth,
Grudge every minute as it passes by,
Made the more mindful that the sweet days die—
—Remember me a little then, I pray,
The idle singer of an empty day.

The heavy trouble, the bewildering care
That weighs us down who live and earn our bread,
These idle verses have no power to bear;
So let me sing of names remembered,
Because they, living not, can ne'er be dead,
Or long time take their memory quite away
From us poor singers of an empty day.

Dreamer of dreams, born out of my due time,
Why should I strive to set the crooked straight ?
Let it suffice me that my murmuring rhyme
Beats with light wing against the ivory gate,
Telling a tale not too importunate
To those who in the sleepy region stay,
Lulled by the singer of an empty day.

Folk say, a wizard to a northern king
At Christmas-tide such wondrous things did show,
That through one window men beheld the spring,
And through another saw the summer glow,
And through a third the fruited vines a-row,
While still, unheard, but in its wonted way,
Piped the drear wind of that December day.

So with this Earthly Paradise it is,
If ye will read aright, and pardon me,
Who strive to build a shadowy isle of bliss
Midmost the beating of the steely sea,
Where tossed about all hearts of men must be ;
Whose ravening monsters mighty men shall slay,
Not the poor singer of an empty day.

II.

ATALANTA'S RACE.

ARGUMENT.

Atalanta, daughter of King Schœneus, not willing to lose her virgin's estate, made it a law to all suitors that they should run a race with her in the public place, and if they failed to overcome her should die unrevenged ; and thus many brave men perished. At last came Milanion, the son of Amphidamas, who, outrunning her with the help of Venus, gained the virgin and wedded her.

THROUGH thick Arcadian woods a hunter went,
Following the beasts up, on a fresh spring day ;
But since his horn-tipped bow but seldom bent,
Now at the noontide nought had happed to slay,
Within a vale he called his hounds away,
Hearkening the echoes of his lone voice cling
About the cliffs and through the beech-trees ring.

But when they ended, still awhile he stood,
And but the sweet familiar thrush could hear,
And all the day-long noises of the wood,
And o'er the dry leaves of the vanished year
His hounds' feet pattering as they drew anear,
And heavy breathing from their heads low hung,
To see the mighty cornel bow unstrung.

Then smiling did he turn to leave the place,
But with his first step some new fleeting thought
A shadow cast across his sun-burnt face ;
I think the golden net that April brought
From some warm world his wavering soul had caught ;
For, sunk in vague sweet longing, did he go
Betwixt the trees with doubtful steps and slow.

Yet howsoever slow he went, at last
The trees grew sparser, and the wood was done ;
Whereon one farewell backward look he cast,
Then, turning round to see what place was won,
With shaded eyes looked underneath the sun,
And o'er green meads and new-turned furrows brown
Beheld the gleaming of King Schœneus' town.

So thitherward he turned, and on each side
The folk were busy on the teeming land,
And man and maid from the brown furrows cried,
Or midst the newly-blossomed vines did stand,
And as the rustic weapon pressed the hand
Thought of the nodding of the well-filled ear,
Or how the knife the heavy bunch should shear.

Merry it was : about him sung the birds,
The spring flowers bloomed along the firm dry road,
The sleek-skinned mothers of the sharp-horned herds
Now for the barefoot milking-maidens lowed ;
While from the freshness of his blue abode,
Glad his death-bearing arrows to forget,
The broad sun blazed, nor scattered plagues as yet.

Through such fair things unto the gates he came,
And found them open, as though peace were there ;
Where through, unquestioned of his race or name,
He entered, and along the streets 'gan fare,
Which at the first of folk were well-nigh bare ;
But pressing on, and going more hastily,
Men hurrying too he 'gan at last to see.

Following the last of these, he still pressed on,
Until an open space he came unto,
Where wreaths of fame had oft been lost and won,
For feats of strength folk there were wont to do.
And now our hunter looked for something new,
Because the whole wide space was bare, and stilled
The high seats were, with eager people filled.

There with the others to a seat he gat,
Whence he beheld a broidered canopy,
'Neath which in fair array King Schœneus sat
Upon his throne with councillors thereby ;
And underneath his well-wrought seat and high,
He saw a golden image of the sun,
A silver image of the Fleet-foot one.

A brazen altar stood beneath their feet
Whereon a thin flame flickered in the wind ;
Nigh this a herald clad in raiment meet
Made ready even now his horn to wind,
By whom a huge man held a sword, entwined
With yellow flowers ; these stood a little space
From off the altar, nigh the starting place.

And there two runners did the sign abide
Foot set to foot,—a young man slim and fair,
Crisp-haired, well knit, with firm limbs often tried
In places where no man his strength may spare ;
Dainty his thin coat was, and on his hair
A golden circlet of renown he wore,
And in his hand an olive garland bore.

But on this day with whom shall he contend ?
A maid stood by him like Diana clad
When in the woods she lists her bow to bend,
Too fair for one to look on and be glad,
Who scarcely yet has thirty summers had,
If he must still behold her from afar ;
Too fair to let the world live free from war.

She seemed all earthly matters to forget ;
Of all tormenting lines her face was clear,
Her wide grey eyes upon the goal were set
Calm and unmoved as though no soul were near ;
But her foe trembled as a man in fear,
Nor from her loveliness one moment turned
His anxious face with fierce desire that burned.

Now through the hush there broke the trumpet's clang
Just as the setting sun made eventide.
Then from light feet a spurt of dust there sprang,
And swiftly were they running side by side ;
But silent did the thronging folk abide
Until the turning-post was reached at last,
And round about it still abreast they passed.

But when the people saw how close they ran,
When half-way to the starting-point they were,
A cry of joy broke forth, whereat the man
Headed the white-foot runner, and drew near
Unto the very end of all his fear ;
And scarce his straining feet the ground could feel,
And bliss unhop'd for o'er his heart 'gan steal.

But midst the loud victorious shouts he heard
Her footsteps drawing nearer, and the sound
Of fluttering raiment, and thereat afeard
His flushed and eager face he turned around,
And even then he felt her past him bound
Fleet as the wind, but scarcely saw her there
Till on the goal she laid her fingers fair.

There stood she breathing like a little child
Amid some warlike clamour laid asleep,
For no victorious joy her red lips smiled,
Her cheek its wonted freshness did but keep ;
No glance lit up her clear grey eyes and deep,
Though some divine thought softened all her face
As once more rang the trumpet through the place.

But her late foe stopped short amidst his course,
One moment gazed upon her piteously,
Then with a groan his lingering feet did force
To leave the spot whence he her eyes could see ;
And, changed like one who knows his time must be
But short and bitter, without any word
He knelt before the bearer of the sword ;

Then high rose up the gleaming deadly blade,
Bared of its flowers, and through the crowded place
Was silence now, and midst of it the maid
Went by the poor wretch at a gentle pace,
And he to hers upturned his sad white face ;
Nor did his eyes behold another sight
Ere on his soul there fell eternal night.

So was the pageant ended, and all folk
Talking of this and that familiar thing
In little groups from that sad concourse broke,
For now the shrill bats were upon the wing,
And soon dark night would slay the evening,
And in dark gardens sang the nightingale
Her little-heeded, oft-repeated tale.

And with the last of all the hunter went,
Who, wondering at the strange sight he had seen,
Prayed an old man to tell him what it meant,
Both why the vanquished man so slain had been,
And if the maiden were an earthly queen,
Or rather what much more she seemed to be,
No sharer in the world's mortality.

"Stranger," said he, "I pray she soon may die
Whose lovely youth has slain so many an one!
King Schœneus' daughter is she verily,
Who when her eyes first looked upon the sun
Was fain to end her life but new begun,
For he had vowed to leave but men alone
Sprung from his loins when he from earth was gone.

"Therefore he bade one leave her in the wood,
And let wild things deal with her as they might,
But this being done, some cruel god thought good
To save her beauty in the world's despite:
Folk say that her, so delicate and white
As now she is, a rough root-grubbing bear
Amidst her shapeless cubs at first did rear.

“In course of time the woodfolk slew her nurse,
And to their rude abode the youngling brought,
And reared her up to be a kingdom's curse;
Who grown a woman, of no kingdom thought,
But armed and swift, 'mid beasts destruction wrought,
Nor spared two shaggy centaur kings to slay
To whom her body seemed an easy prey.

“So to this city, led by fate, she came
Whom known by signs, whereof I cannot tell,
King Schœneus for his child at last did claim,
Nor elsewhere since that day doth she dwell
Sending too many a noble soul to hell—
What! thine eyes glisten! what then, thinkest thou
Her shining head unto the yoke to bow?

“Listen, my son, and love some other maid
For she the saffron gown will never wear,
And on no flower-strewn couch shall she be laid,
Nor shall her voice make glad a lover's ear;
Yet if of Death thou hast not any fear,
Yea, rather, if thou lov'st him utterly,
Thou still may'st woo her ere thou com'st to die,—

“Like him that on this day thou sawest lie dead;
For, fearing as I deem the sea-born one,
The maid has vowed e'en such a man to wed
As in the course her swift feet can outrun,
But whoso fails herein, his days are done:
He came the nighest that was slain to-day,
Although with him I deem she did but play.

“ Behold, such mercy Atalanta gives
To those that long to win her loveliness ;
Be wise ! be sure that many a maid there lives
Gentler than she, of beauty little less,
Whose swimming eyes thy loving words shall bless,
When in some garden, knee set close to knee,
Thou sing'st the song that love may teach to thee.”

So to the hunter spake that ancient man,
And left him for his own home presently :
But he turned round, and through the moonlight wan
Reached the thick wood, and there 'twixt tree and tree
Distraught he passed the long night feverishly,
'Twixt sleep and waking, and at dawn arose
To wage hot war against his speechless foes.

There to the hart's flank seemed his shaft to grow,
As panting down the broad green glades he flew,
There by his horn the Dryads well might know
His thrust against the bear's heart had been true,
And there Adonis' bane his javelin slew,
But still in vain through rough and smooth he went,
For none the more his restlessness was spent.

So wandering, he to Argive cities came,
And in the lists with valiant men he stood,
And by great deeds he won him praise and fame,
And heaps of wealth for little-valued blood ;
But none of all these things, or life, seemed good
Unto his heart, where still unsatisfied
A ravenous longing warred with fear and pride.

Therefore it happed when but a month had gone
Since he had left King Schœneus' city old,
In hunting-gear again, again alone
The forest-bordered meads did he behold,
Where still 'mid thoughts of August's quivering gold
Folk hoed the wheat, and clipped the vine in trust
Of faint October's purple-foaming must.

And once again he passed the peaceful gate,
While to his beating heart his lips did lie,
That owning not victorious love and fate,
Said, half aloud, "And here, too, must I try,
To win of alien men the mastery,
And gather for my head fresh meed of fame
And cast new glory on my father's name."

In spite of that, how beat his heart, when first
Folk said to him, "And art thou come to see
That which still makes our city's name accurst
Among all mothers for its cruelty?
Then know indeed that fate is good to thee
Because to-morrow a new luckless one
Against the whitefoot maid is pledged to run."

So on the morrow with no curious eyes
As once he did, that piteous sight he saw,
Nor did that wonder in his heart arise
As toward the goal the conquering maid 'gan draw,
Nor did he gaze upon her eyes with awe,
Too full the pain of longing filled his heart
For fear or wonder there to have a part.

But O, how long the night was ere it went !
How long it was before the dawn begun
Showed to the wakening birds the sun's intent
That not in darkness should the world be done !
And then, and then, how long before the sun
Bade silently the toilers of the earth
Get forth to fruitless cares or empty mirth !

And long it seemed that in the market-place
He stood and saw the chaffering folk go by,
Ere from the ivory throne King Schœneus' face
Looked down upon the murmur royally,
But then came trembling that the time was nigh
When he midst pitying looks his love must claim,
And jeering voices must salute his name.

But as the throng he pierced to gain the throne,
His alien face distraught and anxious told
What hopeless errand he was bound upon,
And, each to each, folk whispered to behold
His god-like limbs ; nay, and one woman old
As he went by must pluck him by the sleeve
And pray him yet that wretched love to leave.

For sidling up she said, "Canst thou live twice,
Fair son ? canst thou have joyful youth again,
That thus thou goest to the sacrifice
Thyself the victim ? nay then, all in vain
Thy mother bore her longing and her pain,
And one more maiden on the earth must dwell
Hopeless of joy, nor fearing death and hell.

"O, fool, thou knowest not the compact then
That with the three-formed goddess she has made
To keep her from the loving lips of men,
And in no saffron gown to be arrayed,
And therewithal with glory to be paid,
And love of her the moonlit river sees
White 'gainst the shadow of the formless trees.

"Come back, and I myself will pray for thee
Unto the sea-born framer of delights,
To give thee her who on the earth may be
The fairest stirrer up to death and fights,
To quench with hopeful days and joyous nights
The flame that doth thy youthful heart consume :
Come back, nor give thy beauty to the tomb."

How should he listen to her earnest speech ?
Words, such as he not once or twice had said
Unto himself, whose meaning scarce could reach
The firm abode of that sad hardihead—
He turned about, and through the marketstead
Swiftly he passed, until before the throne
In the cleared space he stood at last alone.

Then said the King, "Stranger, what dost thou here ?
Have any of my folk done ill to thee ?
Or art thou of the forest men in fear ?
Or art thou of the sad fraternity
Who still will strive my daughter's mates to be,
Staking their lives to win to earthly bliss
The lonely maid, the friend of Artemis ?"

"O King," he said, "thou sayest the word indeed ;
Nor will I quit the strife till I have won
My sweet delight, or death to end my need.
And know that I am called Milanion,
Of King Amphidamas the well-loved son :
So fear not that to thy old name, O King,
Much loss or shame my victory will bring."

"Nay, Prince," said Schœneus, "welcome to this land
Thou wert indeed, if thou wert here to try
Thy strength 'gainst some one mighty of his hand ;
Nor would we grudge the well-won mastery.
But now, why wilt thou come to me to die,
And at my door lay down thy luckless head,
Swelling the band of the unhappy dead,

"Whose curses even now my heart doth fear ?
Lo, I am old, and know what life can be,
And what a bitter thing is death anear.
O Son ! be wise, and hearken unto me,
And if no other can be dear to thee,
At least as now, yet is the world full wide,
And bliss in seeming hopeless hearts may hide :

"But if thou lovest life, then all is lost."
"Nay, King," Milanion said, "thy words are vain.
Doubt not that I have counted well the cost.
But say, on what day wilt thou that I gain
Fulfilled delight, or death to end my pain ?
Right glad were I if it could be to-day,
And all my doubts at rest for ever lay."

"Nay," said King Schœneus, "thus it shall not be,
But rather shalt thou let a month go by,
And weary with thy prayers for victory
What god thou know'st the kindest and most nigh.
So doing, still perchance thou shalt not die :
And with my goodwill wouldst thou have the maid,
For of the equal gods I grow afraid.

"And until then, O Prince, be thou my guest,
And all these troublous things awhile forget."
"Nay," said he, "couldst thou give my soul good rest,
And on mine head a sleepy garland set,
Then had I 'scaped the meshes of the net,
Nor shouldst thou hear from me another word ;
But now, make sharp thy fearful heading sword.

"Yet will I do what son of man may do,
And promise all the gods may most desire,
That to myself I may at least be true ;
And on that day my heart and limbs so tire,
With utmost strain and measureless desire,
That, at the worst, I may but fall asleep
When in the sunlight round that sword shall sweep."

He went therewith, nor anywhere would bide,
But unto Argos restlessly did wend ;
And there, as one who lays all hope aside,
Because the leech has said his life must end,
Silent farewell he bade to foe and friend,
And took his way unto the restless sea,
For there he deemed his rest and help might be.

Upon the shore of Argolis there stands
A temple to the goddess that he sought,
That, turned unto the lion-bearing lands,
Fenced from the east, of cold winds hath no thought,
Though to no homestead there the sheaves are brought,
No groaning press torments the close-clipped murk,
Lonely the fane stands, far from all men's work.

Pass through a close, set thick with myrtle trees,
Through the brass doors that guard the holy place,
And entering, hear the washing of the seas
That twice a-day rise high above the base,
And with the south-west urging them, embrace
The marble feet of her that standeth there
That shrink not, naked though they be and fair.

Small is the fane through which the seawind sings
About Queen Venus' well-wrought image white,
But hung around are many precious things,
The gifts of those who, longing for delight,
Have hung them there within the goddess' sight,
And in return have taken at her hands
The living treasures of the Grecian lands.

And thither now has come Milanion,
And showed unto the priests' wide open eyes
Gifts fairer than all those that there have shone,
Silk cloths, inwrought with Indian fantasies,
And bowls inscribed with sayings of the wise
Above the deeds of foolish living things,
And mirrors fit to be the gifts of kings.

And now before the Sea-born One he stands,
By the sweet veiling smoke made dim and soft,
And while the incense trickles from his hands,
And while the odorous smoke-wreaths hang aloft,
Thus doth he pray to her : " O Thou, who oft
Hast holpen man and maid in their distress
Despise me not for this my wretchedness !

" O goddess, among us who dwell below,
Kings and great men, great for a little while,
Have pity on the lowly heads that bow,
Nor hate the hearts that love them without guile ;
Wilt thou be worse than these, and is thy smile
A vain device of him who set thee here,
An empty dream of some artificer ?

" O, great one, some men love, and are ashamed ;
Some men are weary of the bonds of love ;
Yea, and by some men lightly art thou blamed,
That from thy toils their lives they cannot move,
And 'mid the ranks of men their manhood prove.
Alas ! O goddess, if thou slayest me
What new immortal can I serve but thee ?

" Think then, will it bring honour to thy head
If folk say, ' Everything aside he cast
And to all fame and honour was he dead,
And to his one hope now is dead at last,
Since all unholpen he is gone and past :
Ah, the gods love not man, for certainly,
He to his helper did not cease to cry.' "

"Nay, but thou wilt help ; they who died before
Not single-hearted as I deem came here,
Therefore unthanked they laid their gifts before
Thy stainless feet, still shivering with their fear,
Lest in their eyes their true thought might appear,
Who sought to be the lords of that fair town,
Dreaded of men and winners of renown.

"O Queen, thou knowest I pray not for this :
O set us down together in some place
Where not a voice can break our heaven of bliss,
Where nought but rocks and I can see her face,
Softening beneath the marvel of thy grace,
Where not a foot our vanished steps can track—
The golden age, the golden age come back !

"O fairest, hear me now who do thy will,
Plead for thy rebel that she be not slain,
But live and love and be thy servant still ;
Ah, give her joy and take away my pain,
And thus two long-enduring servants gain.
And easy thing this is to do for me,
What need of my vain words to weary thee !

"But none the less, this place will I not leave
Until I needs must go my death to meet,
Or at thy hands some happy sign receive
That in great joy we twain may one day greet
Thy presence here and kiss thy silver feet,
Such as we deem thee, fair beyond all words,
Victorious o'er our servants and our lords."

Then from the altar back a space he drew,
But from the Queen turned not his face away,
But 'gainst a pillar leaned, until the blue
That arched the sky, at ending of the day,
Was turned to ruddy gold and changing grey,
And clear, but low, the nigh-ebbed windless sea
In the still evening murmured ceaselessly.

And there he stood when all the sun was down,
Nor had he moved, when the dim golden light,
Like the far lustre of a godlike town,
Had left the world to seeming hopeless night,
Nor would he move the more when wan moonlight
Streamed through the pillars for a little while,
And lighted up the white Queen's changeless smile.

Nought noted he the shallow-flowing sea
As step by step it set the wrack a-swim;
The yellow torchlight nothing noted he
Wherein with fluttering gown and half-bared limb
The temple damsels sung their midnight hymn;
And nought the doubled stillness of the fane
When they were gone and all was hushed again.

But when the waves had touched the marble base,
And steps the fish swim over twice a-day,
The dawn beheld him sunken in his place
Upon the floor; and sleeping there he lay,
Not heeding aught the little jets of spray
The roughened sea brought nigh, across him cast,
For as one dead all thought from him had passed.

Yet long before the sun had showed his head,
Long ere the varied hangings on the wall
Had gained once more their blue and green and red,
He rose as one some well-known sign doth call
When war upon the city's gates doth fall,
And scarce like one fresh risen out of sleep,
He 'gan again his broken watch to keep.

Then he turned round ; not for the sea-gull's cry
That wheeled above the temple in his flight,
Not for the fresh south wind that lovingly
Breathed on the new-born day and dying night,
By some strange hope 'twixt fear and great delight
Drew round his face, now flushed, now pale and wan,
And still constrained his eyes the sea to scan.

Now a faint light lit up the southern sky,
Not sun or moon, for all the world was grey,
But this a bright cloud seemed, that drew anigh,
Lighting the dull waves that beneath it lay
As toward the temple still it took its way,
And still grew greater, till Milanion
Saw nought for dazzling light that round him shone.

But as he staggered with his arms outspread,
Delicious unnamed odours breathed around,
For languid happiness he bowed his head,
And with wet eyes sank down upon the ground,
Nor wished for aught, or any dream he found
To give him reason for that happiness,
Or make him ask more knowledge of his bliss.

At last his eyes were cleared, and he could see
Through happy tears the goddess face to face
With that faint image of Divinity,
Whose well-wrought smile and dainty changeless grace
Until that morn so gladdened all the place ;
Then he, unwitting cried aloud her name
And covered up his eyes for fear and shame.

But through the stillness he her voice could hear
Piercing his heart with joy scarce bearable,
That said, " Milanion, wherefore dost thou fear,
I am not hard to those who love me well ;
List to what I a second time will tell,
And thou mayest hear perchance, and live to save
The cruel maiden from a loveless grave.

" See, by my feet three golden apples lie—
Such fruit among the heavy roses falls,
Such fruit my watchful damsels carefully
Store up within the best loved of my walls,
Ancient Damascus, where the lover calls
Above my unseen head, and faint and light
The rose-leaves flutter round me in the night.

" And note, that these are not alone most fair
With heavenly gold, but longing strange they bring
Unto the hearts of men, who will not care
Beholding these, for any once-loved thing
Till round the shining sides their fingers cling.
And thou shalt see thy well-girt swift-foot maid
By sight of these amidst her glory stayed.

“ For bearing these within a scrip with thee,
When first she heads thee from the starting-place
Cast down the first one for her eyes to see,
And when she turns aside make on apace,
And if again she heads thee in the race
Spare not the other two to cast aside
If she not long enough behind will bide.

“ Farewell, and when has come the happy time
That she Diana’s raiment must unbind
And all the world seems blessed with Saturn’s clime
And thou with eager arms about her twined
Beholdest first her grey eyes growing kind,
Surely, O trembler, thou shalt scarcely then
Forget the Helper of unhappy men.”

Milanion raised his head at this last word
For now so soft and kind she seemed to be
No longer of her Godhead was he feared ;
Too late he looked, for nothing could he see
But the white image glimmering doubtfully
In the departing twilight cold and grey,
And those three apples on the steps that lay.

These then he caught up quivering with delight,
Yet fearful lest it all might be a dream ;
And though aweary with the watchful night,
And sleepless nights of longing, still did deem
He could not sleep ; but yet the first sun-beam
That smote the fane across the heaving deep
Shone on him laid in calm untroubled sleep.

But little ere the noontide did he rise,
And why he felt so happy scarce could tell
Until the gleaming apples met his eyes.
Then leaving the fair place where this befell
Oft he looked back as one who loved it well,
Then homeward to the haunts of men 'gan wend
To bring all things unto a happy end.

Now has the lingering month at last gone by,
Again are all folk round the running place,
Nor other seems the dismal pageantry
Than heretofore, but that another face
Looks o'er the smooth course ready for the race,
For now, beheld of all, Milanion
Stands on the spot he twice has looked upon.

But yet—what change is this that holds the maid?
Does she indeed see in his glittering eye
More than disdain of the sharp shearing blade,
Some happy hope of help and victory?
The others seemed to say, "We come to die,
Look down upon us for a little while,
That dead, we may bethink us of thy smile."

But he—what look of mastery was this
He cast on her? Why were his lips so red?
Why was his face so flushed with happiness?
So looks not one who deems himself but dead,
E'en if to death he bows a willing head;
So rather looks a god well pleased to find
Some earthly damsel fashioned to his mind.

Why must she drop her lids before his gaze,
And even as she casts adown her eyes
Redden to note his eager glance of praise,
And wish that she were clad in other guise ?
Why must the memory to her heart arise
Of things unnoticed when they first were heard,
Some lover's song, some answering maiden's word ?

What makes these longings, vague, without a name,
And this vain pity never felt before,
This sudden languor, this contempt of fame,
This tender sorrow for the time past o'er,
These doubts that grow each minute more and more ?
Why does she tremble as the time grows near,
And weak defeat and woeful victory fear ?

Now while she seemed to hear her beating heart,
Above their heads the trumpet blast rang out
And forth they sprang ; and she must play her part.
Then flew her white feet, knowing not a doubt,
Though slackening once, she turned her head about,
But then she cried aloud and faster fled
Than e'er before, and all men deemed him dead.

But with no sound he raised aloft his hand,
And thence what seemed a ray of light there flew
And past the maid rolled on along the sand ;
Then trembling she her feet together drew,
And in her heart a strong desire there grew
To have the toy ; some god she thought had given
That gift to her, to make of earth a heaven.

Then from the course with eager steps she ran,
And in her odorous bosom laid the gold.
But when she turned again, the great-limbed man,
Now well ahead she failed not to behold,
And mindful of her glory waxing cold,
Sprang up and followed him in hot pursuit,
Though with one hand she touched the golden fruit.

Note too, the bow that she was wont to bear
She laid aside to grasp the glittering prize,
And o'er her shoulder from the quiver fair
Three arrows fell and lay before her eyes
Unnoticed, as amidst the people's cries
She sprang to head the strong Milanion,
Who now the turning-post had well nigh won.

But as he set his mighty hand on it
White fingers underneath his own were laid,
And white limbs from his dazzled eyes did flit,
Then he the second fruit cast by the maid:
But she ran on awhile, then as afraid
Wavered and stopped, and turned and made no stay,
Until the globe with its bright fellow lay.

Then, as a troubled glance she cast around
Now far ahead the Argive could she see,
And in her garment's hem one hand she wound
To keep the double prize, and strenuously
Sped o'er the course, and little doubt had she
To win the day, though now but scanty space
Was left betwixt him and the winning place.

Short was the way unto such winged feet,
Quickly she gained upon him till at last
He turned about her eager eyes to meet
And from his hand the third fair apple cast.
She wavered not, but turned and ran so fast
After the prize that should her bliss fulfil,
That in her hand it lay ere it was still.

Nor did she rest, but turned about to win
Once more, an unblest woeful victory—
And yet—and yet—why does her breath begin
To fail her,—and her feet drag heavily?
Why fails she now to see if far or nigh
The goal is? why do her grey eyes grow dim?
Why do these tremors run through every limb?

She spreads her arms abroad some stay to find
Else must she fall, indeed, and findeth this,
A strong man's arms about her body twined.
Nor may she shudder now to feel his kiss,
So wrapped she is in new unbroken bliss:
Made happy that the foe the prize hath won,
She weeps glad tears for all her glory done.

Shatter the trumpet, hew adown the posts!
Upon the brazen altar break the sword,
And scatter incense to appease the ghosts
Of those who died here by their own award.
Bring forth the image of the mighty Lord,
And her who unseen o'er the runners hung,
And did a deed for ever to be sung.

Here are the gathered folk ; make no delay
Open King Schoeneus' well-filled treasury,
Bring out the gifts long hid from light of day,
The golden bowls o'erwrought with imagery,
Gold chains, and unguents brought from over sea,
The saffron gown the old Phœnician brought,
Within the temple of the Goddess wrought.

O ye, O damsels, who shall never see
Her, that Love's servant bringeth now to you,
Returning from another victory,
In some cool bower do all that now is due !
Since she in token of her service new
Shall give to Venus offerings rich enow,
Her maiden zone, her arrows, and her bow.

LOVE IS ENOUGH.

1873.

WILLIAM MORRIS.

THE MUSIC.

I.—THE FIRST LYRIC.

LOVE is enough : though the World be a-waning
And the woods have no voice but the voice of
complaining,

Though the sky be too dark for dim eyes to discover
The gold-cups and daisies fair blooming thereunder,
Though the hills be held shadows, and the sea a dark
wonder,

And this day draw a veil over all deeds passed over,
Yet their hands shall not tremble, their feet shall not falter ;
The void shall not weary, the fear shall not alter
These lips and these eyes of the loved and the lover.

II.—THE CONCLUDING LYRIC.

Love is enough : ho ye who seek saving,
Go no further ; come hither ; there have been who
have found it,
And these know the House of Fulfilment of Craving ;
These know the Cup with the roses around it ;
These know the World's wound and the balm that
hath bound it :
Cry out, the World heedeth not, 'Love, lead us home !'

He leadeth, He hearkeneth, He cometh to you-ward ;
Set your faces as steel to the fears that assemble
Round his goad for the faint, and his scourge for the
froward :

Lo his lips, how with tales of last kisses they tremble !
Lo his eyes of all sorrow that may not dissemble !
Cry out, for he heedeth, ' O Love, lead us home.'

O hearken the words of his voice of compassion :
' Come cling round about me, ye faithful who
sicken
Of the weary unrest and the world's passing fashion !
As the rain in mid-morning your troubles shall
thicken,
But surely within you some Godhead doth quicken,
As ye cry to me heeding, and leading you home.

' Come—pain ye shall have, and be blind to the ending !
Come—fear ye shall have, mid the sky's overcasting !
Come—change ye shall have, for far are ye wending !
Come—no crown ye shall have for your thirst and
your fasting,
But the kissed lips of Love and fair life everlasting !
Cry out, for one heedeth, who leadeth you home !'

Is he gone ? was he with us ?—ho ye who seek saving,
Go no further ; come hither ; for have we not found it ?
Here is the House of Fulfilment of Craving ;
Here is the Cup with the roses around it ;
The World's wound well healed, and the balm
that hath bound it :
Cry out ! for he heedeth, fair Love that led home.

THE STORY OF SIGURD THE VOLSUNG.

1877.

WILLIAM MORRIS.

(FROM BOOK I.—SIGMUND).

THEN in the grave-mound's darkness did Sigmund
the king upstand,
And unto that saw of battle he set his naked hand ;
And hard the gift of Odin home to their breasts they
drew ;
Sawed Sigmund, sawed Sinfiotli, till the stone was
cleft atwo,
And they met and kissed together : then they hewed
and heaved full hard
Till lo, through the bursten rafters the winter heavens
bestarred !
And they leap out merry-hearted ; nor is there need
to say
A many words between them of whither was the
way.

For they took the night-watch sleeping, and slew
them one and all,
And then on the winter fagots they make them haste
to fall,
They pile the oak-trees cloven, and when the oak-
beams fail
They bear the ash and the rowan, and build a mighty
bale

About the dwelling of Siggeir, and lay the torch
therein.

Then they drew their swords and watched it till the
flames began to win

Hard on to the mid-hall's rafters, and those feasters
of the folk,

As the fire-flakes fell among them, to their last of days
awoke.

By the gable-door stood Sigmund and fierce Sinfiotli
stood

Red-lit by the door of the women in the lane of blaz-
ing wood :

To death each doorway opened, and death was in
the hall.

Then amid the gathered Goth-folk 'gan Siggeir the
king to call :

"Who lit the fire I burn in, and what shall buy me
peace ?

Will ye take my heaped-up treasure, or ten years of
my fields' increase,

Or half of my father's kingdom ? O toilers at the oar,

O wasters of the sea-plain, now labour ye no more !

But take the gifts I bid you, and lie upon the gold,

And clothe your limbs in purple and the silken
women hold !"

But a great voice cried o'er the fire : "Nay no such
men are we,

No tuggers at the hawser, no wasters of the sea :

We will have the gold and the purple when we list
such things to win ;

But now we think on our fathers, and avenging of
our kin.

Not all King Siggeir's kingdom, and not all the
world's increase
For ever and for ever, shall buy thee life and peace.
For now is the tree-bough blossomed that sprang
from murder's seed ;
And the death-doomed and the buried are they that
do the deed ;
Now when the dead shall ask thee by whom thy
days were done,
Thou shalt say by Sigmund the Volsung, and Sinfiotli,
Signy's son."

Then stark fear fell on the earl-folk, and silent they
abide
Amid the flaming penfold ; and again the great voice
cried,
As the Goth-king's golden pillars grew red amidst the
blaze :
" Ye women of the Goth-folk come forth upon your
ways ;
And thou, Signy, O my sister, come forth from death
and hell,
That beneath the boughs of the Branstock once more
we twain may dwell."

Forth came the white-faced women and passed
Sinfiotli's sword,
Free by the glaive of Odin the trembling pale ones
poured,
But amid their hurrying terror came never Signy's
feet ;
And the pearls of the throne of Siggeir shrunk in the
fervent heat.

Then the men of war surged outward to the twofold
doors of bane,
But there played the sword of Sigmund amidst the
fiery lane
Before the gable door-way, and by the woman's
door
Sinfiotli sang to the sword-edge amid the bale-fire's
roar,
And back again to the burning the earls of the Goth-
folk shrank :
And the light low licked the tables, and the wine of
Siggeir drank.

Lo now to the woman's doorway, the steel-watched
bower of flame,
Clad in her queenly raiment King Volsung's daughter
came
Before Sinfiotli's sword-point ; and she said : " O
mightiest son,
Best now is our departing in the day my grief hath
won,
And the many days of toiling, and the travail of my
womb,
And the hate, and the fire of longing : thou, son, and
this day of the doom
Have long been as one to my heart ; and now shall
I leave you both,
And well ye may wot of the slumber my heart is
nothing loth ;
And all the more, as, meseemeth, thy day shall not
be long
To weary thee with labour and mingle wrong with
wrong.

Yea, and I wot that the daylight thine eyes had never
seen
Save for a great king's murder and the shame of a
mighty queen.
But let thy soul, I charge thee, o'er all these things
prevail
To make thy short day glorious and leave a goodly
tale."

She kissed him and departed, and unto Sigmund
went
As now against the dawning grey grew the winter
bent :
As the night and the morning mingled he saw her
face once more,
And he deemed it fair and ruddy as in the days of
yore ;
Yet fast the tears fell from her, and the sobs upheaved
her breast :
And she said : " My youth was happy ; but this hour
belike is best
Of all the days of my life-tide, that soon shall have
an end.
I have come to greet thee, Sigmund, then back again
must I wend,
For his bed the Goth-king dighteth : I have lain
therein, time was,
And loathed the sleep I won there : but lo, how all
things pass,
And hearts are changed and softened, for lovely now
it seems.
Yet fear not my forgetting : I shall see thee in my
dreams

A mighty king of the world 'neath the boughs of the
Branstock green,
With thine earls and thy lords about thee as the
Volsung fashion hath been :
And there shall all ye remember how I loved the
Volsung name,
Nor spared to spend for its blooming my joy, and my
life, and my fame.
For hear thou : that Sinfiotli, who hath wrought out
our desire,
Who hath compassed about King Siggeir with this
sea of a deadly fire,
Who brake thy grave asunder—my child and thine
he is,
Begot in that house of the Dwarf-kind for no other
end than this ;
The son of Volsung's daughter, the son of Volsung's
son.
Look, look ! might another helper this deed with thee
have done ? ”

And indeed as the word she uttereth, high up the red
flames flare
To the nether floor of the heavens : and yet men see
them there,
The golden roofs of Siggeir, the hall of the silver
door
That the Goths and the Gods had builded to last for
evermore.

She said : “ Farewell, my brother, for the earls my
candles light
And I must wend me bedward lest I lose the flower
of night.”

And soft and sweet she kissed him, ere she turned
about again,
And a little while was Signy beheld of the eyes of
men;
And as she crossed the threshold, day brightened at
her back
Nor once did she turn her earthward from the reek
and the whirling wrack,
But fair in the fashion of Queens passed on to the
heart of the hall.

And then King Siggeir's roof-tree upheaved for its
utmost fall,
And its huge walls clashed together, and its mean
and lowly things
The fire of death confounded with the tokens of the
kings.
A sign for many people on the land of the Goths it
lay,
A lamp of the earth none needed, for the bright sun
brought the day.

CHANTS FOR SOCIALISTS.

1885.

WILLIAM MORRIS.

THE MARCH OF THE WORKERS.

WHAT is this, the sound and rumour? What is
this that all men hear,
Like the wind in hollow valleys when the storm is
drawing near,
Like the rolling on of ocean in the eventide of fear?
'Tis the people marching on.

Whither go they, and whence come they? What are
these of whom ye tell?
In what country are they dwelling 'twixt the gates
of heaven and hell?
Are they mine or thine for money? Will they serve
a master well?

Still the rumour's marching on.
Hark the rolling of the thunder!
Lo the sun! and lo thereunder
Riseth wrath, and hope, and wonder,
And the host comes marching on.

Forth they come from grief and torment; on they
wend toward health and mirth,
All the wide world is their dwelling, every corner of
the earth.
Buy them, sell them for thy service! Try the bargain
what 'tis worth

For the days are marching on.

These are they who build thy houses, weave thy
raiment, win thy wheat,
Smooth the rugged, fill the barren, turn the bitter
into sweet.
All for thee this day—and ever. What reward for
them is meet?

Till the host comes marching on.
Hark the rolling of the thunder!
Lo the sun! and lo thereunder
Riseth wrath, and hope, and wonder,
And the host comes marching on.

Many a hundred years passed over have they laboured
deaf and blind;
Never tidings reached their sorrow, never hope their
toil might find.
Now at last they've heard and hear it, and the cry
comes down the wind,
And their feet are marching on.

O ye rich men hear and tremble! for with words the
sound is rife:
"Once for you and death we laboured; changed
henceforward is the strife.
We are men, and we shall battle for the world of
men and life;

And our host is marching on."
Hark the rolling of the thunder!
Lo the sun! and lo thereunder
Riseth wrath, and hope, and wonder,
And the host comes marching on.

"Is it war, then? Will ye perish as the dry wood
in the fire?

Is it peace? Then be ye of us, let your hope be our
desire.

Come and live! for life awaketh, and the world shall
never tire;

And hope is marching on."

"On we march then, we the workers, and the rumour
that ye hear

Is the blended sound of battle and deliv'rance drawing
near;

For the hope of every creature is the banner that we
bear,

And the world is marching on.

Hark the rolling of the thunder!

Lo the sun! and lo thereunder

Riseth wrath, and hope, and wonder,

And the host comes marching on.

A DEATH SONG.

1887.

WILLIAM MORRIS.

WHAT cometh here from west to east a-wending ?
And who are these, the marchers stern and slow?
We bear the message that the rich are sending
Aback to those who bade them wake and know.
Not one, not one, nor thousands must they slay
But one and all if they would dusk the day.

We asked them for a life of toilsome earning,
They bade us bide their leisure for our bread,
We craved to speak to tell our woeful learning,
We come back speechless, bearing back our dead.
Not one, not one, nor thousands must they slay,
But one and all if they would dusk the day.

They will not learn ; they have no ears to hearken ;
They turn their faces from the eyes of fate ;
Their gay-lit halls shut out the skies that darken.
But, lo ! this dead man knocking at the gate,
Not one, not one, nor thousands must they slay,
But one and all if they would dusk the day.

Here lies the sign that we shall break our prison ;
Amidst the storm he won a prisoner's rest :
But in the cloudy dawn the sun arisen
Brings us our day of work to win the best.
Not one, not one, nor thousands must they slay
But one and all if they would dusk the day.

THE HOUSE OF THE WOLFINGS.

1889.

WILLIAM MORRIS.

THE TALE OF THE HAUBERK.

(FROM CHAPTER XXVI.)

“HEAR then the tale of the Hauberk and the truth
there is to tell :
There was a maid of the God-kin, and she loved a
man right well,
Who unto the battle was wending ; and she of her
wisdom knew
That thence to the folk-hall threshold should come
back but a very few ;
And she feared for her love, for she doubted that of
these he should not be ;
So she wended the wilds lamenting, as I have
lamented for thee ;
And many wise she pondered, how to bring her will
to pass
(E'en as I for thee have pondered), as her feet led
over the grass,
Till she lifted her eyes in the wild-wood, and lo !
she stood before
The Hall of the Hollow-places ; and the Dwarf-lord
stood in the door
And held in his hand the Hauberk, whereon the
hammer's blow
The last of all had been smitten, and the sword
should be hammer now.

Then the Dwarf beheld her fairness, and the wild-
wood many-leaved

Before his eyes was reeling at the hope his heart
conceived ;

So sorely he longed for her body ; and he laughed
before her and cried,

‘O Lady of the Disir, thou farest wandering wide
Lamenting thy belovèd and the folk-mote of the spear,
But if amidst of the battle this child of the hammer
he bear

He shall laugh at the foemen’s edges and come back
to thy lily breast

And of all the days of his life-time shall his coming
years be best.’

Then she bowed adown her godhead and sore for
the Hauberk she prayed ;

But his greedy eyes devoured her as he stood in
the door and said ;

‘Come, lie in mine arms ! Come hither, and we
twain the night to wake !

And then as a gift of the morning the Hauberk
shall ye take.’

So she humbled herself before him, and entered into
the cave,

The dusky, the deep-gleaming, the gem-strewn
golden grave.

But he saw not her girdle loosened or her bosom
gleam on his love,

For she set the sleep-thorn in him, that he saw, but
might not move,

Though the bitter salt tears burned him for the
anguish of his greed ;

And she took the hammer’s offspring, her unearned
morning meed,

And went her ways from the rock-hall and was glad
for her warrior's sake.

But behind her dull speech followed, and the voice
of the hollow spake :

'Thou hast left me bound in anguish, and hast gained
thine heart's desire ;

Now I would that the dewy night-grass might be to
thy feet as the fire,

And shrivel thy raiment about thee, and leave thee
bare to the flame,

And no way but a fiery furnace for the road whereby
ye came !

But since the folk of God-home we may not slay nor
smite,

And that fool of the folk that thou lovest, thou hast
saved in my despite,

Take with thee, thief of God-home, this other word
I say :

Since the safeguard wrought in the ring-mail I may
not do away

I lay this curse upon it, that whoso weareth the
same,

Shall save his life in the battle, and have the battle's
shame ;

He shall live through wrack and ruin, and ever have
the worse,

And drag adown his kindred, and bear the people's
curse.'

"Lo, this the tale of the Hauberk, and I knew it for
the truth :

And little I thought of the kindreds ; of their day I
had no ruth ;

For I said, They are doomed to departure ; in a little
while must they wane,
And nought it helpeth or hindreth if I hold my hand
or refrain.
Yea, thou wert become the kindred, both thine and
mine ; and thy birth
To me was the roofing of heaven, and the building
up of earth.
I have loved, and I must sorrow ; thou hast lived,
and thou must die ;
Ah, wherefore were there others in the world than
thou and I ? ”

THE ROOTS OF THE MOUNTAINS.

1890.

WILLIAM MORRIS.

I.—SONG.

(FROM CHAPTER VI.)

IN hay-tide, through the day new-born,
Across the meads we come ;
Our hauberks brush the blossomed corn
A furlong short of home.

Ere yet the gables we behold
Forth flasheth the red sun,
And smites our fallow helms and cold
Though all the fight be done.

In this last mead of mowing-grass
Sweet doth the clover smell,
Crushed neath our feet red with the pass
Where hell was blent with hell.

And now the willowy stream is nigh,
Down wend we to the ford ;
No shafts across its fishes fly,
Nor flasheth there a sword.

But lo ! what gleameth on the bank
Across the water wan,
As when our blood the mouse-ear drank
And red the river ran ?

Nay, hasten to the ripple clear,
Look at the grass beyond !
Lo ye the dainty band and dear
Of maidens fair and fond !

Lo how they needs must take the stream !
The water hides their feet ;
On fair kind arms the gold doth gleam,
And midst the ford we meet.

Up through the garden two and two,
And on the flowers we drip ;
Their wet feet kiss the morning dew
As lip lies close to lip.

Here now we sing ; here now we stay :
By these gray walls we tell
The love that lived from out the fray,
The love that fought and fell.

II.—A LAY OF TIME PAST.

(FROM CHAPTER IX.)

'Tis over the hill and over the dale
Men ride from the city fast and far,
If they may have a soothfast tale,
True tidings of the host of war.

And first they hap on men-at-arms,
All clad in steel from head to foot :
Now tell true tale of the new-come harms,
And the gathered hosts of the mountain-root.

Fair sirs, from murder-carles we flee,
Whose fashion is as the mountain-trolls' ;
No man can tell how many they be,
And the voice of their host as the thunder rolls.

They were weary men at the ending of day,
But they spurred nor stayed for longer word.
Now ye, O merchants, whither away ?
What do ye there with the helm and the sword ?

O we must fight for life and gear,
For our beasts are spent and our wains are stayed,
And the host of the Mountain-men draws near,
That maketh all the world afraid.

They left the chapmen on the hill,
And through the eve and through the night
They rode to have true tidings still,
And were there on the way when the dawn was bright.

O damsels fair, what do ye then
To loiter thus upon the way,
And have no fear of the Mountain-men,
The host of the carles that strip and slay ?

O riders weary with the road,
Come eat and drink on the grass hereby !
And lay you down in a fair abode
Till the mid-day sun is broad and high ;

Then unto you shall we come aback,
And lead you forth to the Mountain-men,
To note their plenty and their lack,
And have true tidings there and then.

'Tis over the hill and over the dale
They ride from the mountain fast and far ;
And now have they learned a soothfast tale,
True tidings of the host of war.

It was summer-tide and the Month of Hay,
And men and maids must fare afield ;
But we saw the place where the bow-staves lay,
And the hall was hung with spear and shield.

When the moon was high we drank in the hall,
And they drank to the guests and were kind and blithe,
And they said : Come back when the chestnuts fall,
And the wine-carts wend across the hythe.

Come oft and o'er again, they said ;
Wander your ways ; but we abide
For all the world in the little stead ;
For wise are we, though the world be wide.

Yea, come in arms if ye will, they said ;
And despite your host shall we abide
For life or death in the little stead ;
For wise are we, though the world be wide.

The Hon. Roden Noel.

1834—1894.

RODEN BERKELEY WRIOTHESLEY NOEL was the son of the first Earl of Gainsborough (second creation) by his fourth marriage, that with Lady Frances Jocelyn, daughter of the Earl of Roden. He was born on the 27th of August, 1834. At the age of twelve he went to Harrow, where he remained for two years; and then to a private tutor, the Rev. Charles Harbin, at Hindon, Wiltshire. Here he stayed for more than five years, forming that taste for philosophy, which persisted through his life-time and powerfully influenced his genius as a poet. Of few writers can it be said so truly that the child was father to the man, or that the scenes in which they lived, the predilections for one form of nature or another they were led to cherish, have so deeply penetrated the fibre and the marrow of their art. It is therefore of importance, in the case of Roden Noel, to dwell upon the several phases of his early life. His childhood was passed at Exton Park, Rutlandshire, Lord Gainsborough's seat; and impressions from that time may be traced in the opening of "A Modern Faust," and the poem addressed "To my Mother." He also visited his grandfather Lord Roden's Irish place at Tollymore. The influence of beautiful wild Irish scenery, and the memory of Irish legends are observable in much of his most fascinating descriptive

poetry, especially in "Melcha," and, I think too, in the "Water Nymph and the Boy." At the age of twenty Mr. Noel went to Cambridge, where he studied with a view to the church, it being then designed that he should occupy a family living. Later on, he decided that his vocation was not for clerical duties. During his university life, he travelled with his parents in France, Germany, and Italy; and directly after taking the honorary degree of M.A. he spent two years alone in the East, visiting Egypt, Nubia, the Holy Land, Palmyra, then Lebanon, Greece, Turkey. In the course of these travels he met with many wild adventures, formed many curious intimacies, and suffered frequently from fever, which seriously affected his health. It was while lying dangerously ill at Beirout that he made the acquaintance of a family with whom he was afterwards connected by marriage. Madame de Brœe, the wife of the Director of the Ottoman Bank in that city, nursed him through his illness, and in 1863 he married their eldest daughter Alice. Mr. Noel had three children by this marriage, the youngest of whom, Eric, died at the age of five, and is the subject of one of his finest books of poems, as it certainly may be called his most pathetic, "A Little Child's Monument."

These Oriental wanderings were in many ways decisive for Mr. Noel's quality as an artist. They stimulated that intense feeling for colour, that sense of the sublimity of nature, the infinity of the desert, the abysses of the mystic past, which distinguish his poetry in so remarkable a manner. It is enough to mention "Mencheres," "Palmyra," "The Dweller in Two Worlds," and "A Vision of the Desert." But

those who are acquainted with his first volume of verse ("Behind the Veil," 1863, now withdrawn from circulation as being too crude in style and substance), must feel that the East made Mr. Noel vocal as a poet. Written under Shelley's influence, this book exhibits an extraordinary wealth of loaded luminous description, an Oriental luxuriance and vividness of colouring, a jungle of speculations, ideas, emotions, steeped in philosophical mysticism, and glowing with rich sensuous imagery. Mr. Noel was, I think, right in omitting "Behind the Veil" from the canon of his works; for the poem is certainly immature and incoherent, displaying but little command over thought and less power over metre and language. Still, to the appreciative student of his style, it will always remain an object of great interest. We find here the embryo of all his qualities and defects—qualities which have been strengthened and developed, defects which have gradually been overcome in the formation of a style peculiar to himself: a style about which (as also in the case of Robert Browning and George Eliot) there may be very different opinions, but which is characteristic of his individual genius.

After Mr. Noel had returned to England and married, he spent some time in a house at Kew, lent him by Lady Jocelyn; and there it was that he composed one of his most remarkable philosophical poems "Pan," the first of a long list of impassioned descants on the higher pantheism. In tracing the external influences of life upon his temperament, it will for the rest suffice to say that during some years he amused himself with mountain climbing—he was a member of the English Alpine Club—and that the

sea has always been his passion. Like a brother-poet of distinction, Mr. Swinburne, he was an excellent swimmer; and his books abound in poetry evincing the deepest sympathy with the sea in all its moods, the keenest observation of its varying aspects. Merely to mention "*Thalatta*," "*Tintadgel*," and "*Suspiria*," is enough.

Omitting "*Behind the Veil*," which Mr. Noel did not recognise as in existence, I find that his true literary career starts with the publication of "*Beatrice, and other Poems*" in 1868. This was followed by "*The Red Flag*" in 1872, by "*Livingstone in Africa*" in 1874, by "*The House of Ravensburg*" in 1877, by "*A Little Child's Monument*" in 1881, by "*Songs of the Heights and Deepes*" in 1885, and by "*A Modern Faust, and other Poems*" in 1888. We have here a large mass of work in poetical form to deal with. In addition, he proved his strength as a critic by his "*Essays on Poetry and Poets*" (1886); as an editor by selections from Spenser and from Otway's dramas; as a biographer by his "*Life of Byron*" (1890). A word should here be said about Mr. Noel's prose, since the specific temper of a man's mind, especially the logic of it, betrays itself in this vehicle, and the student of one who is pre-eminently a poet may find a clue here to the poet's strength and weakness as a singer. Speaking candidly, I do not think that Mr. Noel ever mastered the art of prose-expression. He does not understand the importance of transitions, of the lucid development of his theme, of the serenity conferred on style by simple and decisive statement. Like a volcano, he pours forth quantities of matter, glowing from the central furnace of his heart and brain; just observations,

luminous meteors of criticism, pungent epigrams at times. But the whole mass is, what Carlyle might have called "fuliginous." The work evolved is confused by blotting and re-blotting, by interpolated sentences, by eddyings around the subject, by superfetation of thoughts. Grammatically, Mr. Noel's method of composition reveals itself in a profuse employment of qualifying terms—"yet," "though," "however," "still," and so forth, recurring with bewildering frequency in the same paragraph, and indicating the oscillation of an intellect engaged in working out its thought on paper, instead of presenting clean-cut thought in final form or in a succession of modulated propositions. Something of the same incoherence, very perceptible in "*Behind the Veil*," survived to the last in his poetic work; and it is perhaps the reason why this has not obtained those suffrages of cultured people and that sympathy of the majority, which its material deserves. There is, besides, a noticeable pre-occupation with things which do not signify in criticism; the opinions of supposed detractors and antagonists, the views of schools with whom the writer disagrees, of people whose ways of thinking and feeling he does not appreciate; mere scoriæ and rubble, spouted forth from his Vesuvian nature to the detriment of sterling truths and lucid observations. Otherwise, his attitude towards men and art and literature is invariably noble, generous, high-minded. Differ as we may from him in single points of critical judgment, we cannot fail to feel ourselves in contact with a large and liberal nature. What is more, the vital atmosphere of philosophic thought breathes through his writing. We commune, not with a pedant or mere literary

student, but with a man who has reflected profoundly and felt keenly about life, humanity, the universe. In Mr. Noel's criticism, art of any sort is always correlated to that from which art springs, which art attempts to represent, the underlying forces of the world, the spirituality inherent in it and in us, the reality which dwells and burns behind the veil of appearances and tangibilities, which gives to us and things around us permanent value in the universal scheme.

This brings me to speak of Mr. Noel as a philosopher. The best of his prose-writings, in my opinion, are his contributions to philosophical speculation, not yet collected into volumes, but scattered through periodicals. In these essays he cast aside the polemical flippancy, and surmounted the stylistic incoherence, which I have indicated as blemishes upon his literary criticism. I will not say that he was a systematic thinker. But he took the subject to be dealt with in a serious spirit, and tackled the problems it presents with real cerebral energy. Two essays on Schopenhauer, published in the *Academy*, might be cited as excellent specimens of his analytical and argumentative faculty. As a theorist, Mr. Noel belongs to the school of transcendental idealism; but this, in him, is so modified by the poet's vivid sense of nature, by the man's keen sympathy with suffering humanity, by vehement passions, and by the prevailing instinct that, for us at least, the concrete is the only real—idealism, I repeat, is so modified in Mr. Noel by qualities which the pure logician and the thinker rarely possess, that it assumes a form of mysticism, difficult to seize, elusive, incapable of presentation in a paragraph or

even in a treatise. His philosophy is more a religion, an enthusiasm, than an organised scheme of speculation. This gives it a peculiar value at the present time, when so-called materialism has abundantly declared itself in systems, which ignore as insoluble the problems offered by the greatest fact apparent to us, the soul. Such thought too lends itself better to poetical than to prose utterance; and by right of this, then, Mr. Noel ranks as the first philosophical poet of our times in England.

In artistic quality Mr. Noel's work steadily improved, until it culminated in "*A Modern Faust*." His blank verse strengthened; his lyrics grew in sweetness and fluidity; his command of metre developed in various directions. To a great extent also, he got rid of those awkward grammatical constructions and uncouth phrases, which are a stumbling-block to educated sensibilities. He tried many species of composition, but not with equal success. He does not seem to me to have possessed the dramatic gift, and for this reason "*The House of Ravensburg*" must be considered a comparative failure. Satire, in the strict sense of that word, was not his forte, although there are powerful passages of satirical description in "*The Red Flag*," "*A Song of Civilisation*," and "*A Modern Faust*." His real strength consists in the combination of full sensuous feeling for the material world with an ever-present sense of the spirit informing it and bringing all its products into vital harmony. This enabled him to paint such pictures of voluptuous beauty and concrete form as "*Ganymede*," "*The Nymph and the Boy*," or "*The Triumph of Bacchus*"; and at the same time to chant the mysteries of life and the universe

in "Pan," "The Dweller in Two Worlds," "A Vision of the Desert," and "A Modern Faust."

In my anxiety to present a tolerably complete image of Mr. Noel's genius in its scope and compass, I have left myself no room for minute criticism. Those who care to study my expressed opinions, will find them in three reviews of "Beatrice," "The Red Flag," and "A Modern Faust" (*Pall Mall Gazette*, Feb. 9, 1869; *Academy*, Jan. 1, 1873, and Jan. 19, 1889). But, what is far more important, Mr. Noel's books lie open to the public, and deserve attentive study. He is not a poet who can be appreciated in specimens and extracts. It is the volume, matter, variety of his work—not merely its finish, its occasional beauties, or its verbal felicities—which give him a considerable place in English literature.

JOHN ADDINGTON SYMONDS.

Mr. John Addington Symonds died at Rome on the 19th of April, 1893, and the Hon. Roden Noel died at Mayence, in Germany, on the 26th of May, 1894. The above article was written in 1890, during the lifetime of the poet. A few changes of tense have been made.—ED.

A VISION OF THE DESERT.

HON. RODEN NOEL.

METHOUGHT I saw the morning bloom
A solemn wilderness illumine,
Desert sand and empty air :
Yet in a moment I was aware
Of One who grew from forth the East,
Mounted upon a vasty Beast.
It swung with silent, equal stride,
With a mighty shadow by the side :
The tawny, tufted hair was frayed ;
The long, protruding snout was laid
Level before it ; looking calm away
From that imperial rising of the Day.
Methought a very awful One
Towered speechless thereupon :
All the figure like a cloud
An ample mantle did enshroud,
Folding heavily dark and white,
Concealing all the face from sight,
Save where through stormlike rifts there came
A terrible gleam of eyes like flame.

Then I beheld how on his arm
A child was lying without alarm.
With innocent rest it lay asleep ;
Awakening soon to laugh and leap ;
Yet well I knew, whatever passed,
The arm that held would hold it fast.
Nor ever then it sought to know
Whose tender strength encircled so,

Living incuriously wise
Under the terrible flame of eyes.
In those sweet early morning hours
It played with dewy, wreathing flowers,
Drinking oft from a little flask
Under the mantle : I heard it ask :
Yea, and at other times the cooling cup
Gentle and merciful He tilted up.

But when the sun began to burn,
I saw the child more restless turn,
Seeking to view the silent One :
Then, growing graver thereupon,
It whispered, "Father !" but I never heard
If any lips in answer stirred.
Yet if no answer reached the child,
I know not why he lay and smiled,
Raising his little arms on high
In a solemn rapture quietly !

The shadow moved, and growing less,
A blue blaze ruled the wilderness.
The child, alert with life and fire,
Gazed all around with infinite desire.
Erect he sat, contented now no more
To nestle, and feed upon the homely store :
He searched the lessening distance whence they came,
He peered into the clear cærulean flame ;
His hand would mingle with the shaggy hair
Of that enormous Living Thing which bare,
Whose feet were planted in the powdery ground
With ne'er a pause, with ne'er a sound.
Yon fascinating, wondrous Infinite
His clear young eyes explored with keen delight :

He gazed into the muffled Countenance,
Undazzled with the rifted radiance:
Then, giving names to all that he espied,
He murmured with a bright triumphant pride,
"I hold their secret: lo! I am satisfied."
Oh! it was rare to see the lovely child,
As with a gaze ecstatical he smiled,
Following with eager, splendour-beaming eyes
A bird magnificent, who sailed the skies
On vast expanded plumes of sanguine white,
Enamoured of transcendent azure light,
Higher and higher soaring to the sun;
Claiming a share in his dominion;
Elate with ardour, like unwearying youth,
Imperially at home in awful realms of Truth!

But ah! the sun beat fierce and merciless
Upon the boundless, barren wilderness.
Then soon, responsive to a slakeless thirst,
Behold upon his ravished sight there burst
A vision of a far-off lake most fair,
Where many a palm was dallying with air,
And soft mimosa: how alluringly
Smiled the sweet water in a blinding sky!
Can he not hear a gentle turtle coo
Among light leaves, yea, very wavelets blue
Lapping among green reeds upon the shore,
Calling him to abide for evermore?
Ah! how doth he impetuous entreat,
And chide the silent, never-lingering feet!
Yet was it strange—for as the feet advanced,
The lake receded, and the waters danced
An eerie dance with all the belts of trees,
And mingled with them, till the sand with these

On the horizon made a marge that wavered,
And all blewsidelong, thin white flame that quavered—
Then one low whispered, "'Tis the Devil's water!"
While in his ear there pealed cruel, unearthly laughter,
On this the child fell ill with fever,
Made many a vain yet wild endeavour
To fling himself from forth the grasp
That held with ne'er-relaxing clasp,
Murmuring, "None holds me fast;
I am a plaything of the blast."
But the Rider from the girdled store
Ministered to him as before.

And while the shadow veered by stealth,
A measure of his primal health
The boy resumed: an air that fanned
Blew veritably o'er the sand;
And little birds before them flew,
Vested in a sober hue,
A paly brown, to suit the home
Where 'tis their destiny to roam.
Yet I am sure that ne'er a bird
Fluting more soft and sweet was heard
Among the lawns of Paradise,
Than these in such a humble guise,
Who, without any rest or haste,
Travel warbling o'er the waste.
Moreover in the sterile soil
Some spots of verdure, while the travellers toil,
Arise; yea, even the sweet oases,
That vanished with the feigning, undulating graces,
Were fair and real delight, however fleeing,
With law distinct of transitory being;
Only illusion for deluding eyes,

That yearn for what nor waste nor world supplies,
Some dim ideal of the soul,
That ever loves, and grows toward the illimitable whole

But ever, as they two solitary range,
And as the immeasurable horizons change,
Upon the child more burdensome doth lie
Sense of impenetrable mystery.
Erst he imagined that he chose to go ;
But now he feels, whether he will or no
One carries him : he joyed to be in life
For possibilities of boundless strife,
Wresting resplendent secrets bold from all :
Now the unmasked immensities appal,
Weighing incumbent on the sense and thought,
As on a dwindling grain of dust, as on a thing of nought !
A moment looking toward the shrouded Face,
Now is he fain his timid eyes to abase :
" Father, unveil ! " he tremulously cries,
Fearing he asks impossibilities.

Yet hearken ! voices musical
Like dew upon the desert fall,
Rising and falling,
Calling, calling !
Very plaintive, sweet, and low,
As the lonely pilgrims go :
Are they spirits of the wild,
Calling, answering low and mild ?
Is it a voice of one departed,
Plaining gentle, unquiet-hearted,
Vainly hungering to enfold
His beloved as of old ?
Severed from our living kind,
In a feeble, wandering wind

Wandering ever ? none can tell
Whence the mystic murmurs well :
But oft an Arab, roaming far
Over sands of Saharâ,
Hears the sweet mysterious measure
With a solemn-hearted pleasure,
Saying, " No wind among the stones
Breathes the rare unearthly tones ! "
And howsoe'er it be, they tell
The soul of things ineffable,
Of a life beyond our death or birth,
Of a universe beyond the earth !

Monotonously weary seemed the way,
While light declining faded slowly away.
Some haze obscured a gradual westering sun,
And all the oppressive firmament was wan.
In it voluminous appears to form
From the horizon a continent of storm,
A ponderous bulk of gathering indigo,
Tinged in its formidable overflow
With hues of livid purple poison-flowers.
In ghastlier whiteness for the night that lowers,
Strewing forlorn the desolate desert pale,
Some grinning skeletons of men assail
My vision ; while a monstrous bird of prey
From a putrescent corpse rends fierce away
The clinging flesh with horrid sound of tearing,
Its beak abruptly plunging, pulling, baring ;
Bald-headed, hideous neck low crouched betwixt
The pressure of strong talons curved, infixed :
Now the proud brain, like fearful Madness, mangling,
Like Sin now with the reeking bosom wrangling ;
Like ignorance, disease, war, tyranny, starvation,

Eating the vitals of a noble fallen nation !
This creature, as they pass, a moment glaring
Voracious-eyed, with vasty vans that cover—
A little further on obscene doth hover
A grey hyena, and he laughs a peal
Of beastly laughter, scraping up a meal
Loathsome from forth the sand : there is a howl
Dolefully borne from where the lean wolves prowl !
Then silence falls upon the deepening gloom,
And sultry air forebodes the smothering Simoom.
Looking toward the child with deep dismay,
I noted his fair ringlets grown to grey,
And sparse like withered bents upon his head :
His pale, worn countenance was drawn with dread ;
Yet in his eyes there burned a grand resolve,
No sights of terror lightly might dissolve.
And now I heard him murmur, " Mighty Father !
I trust thee ; yea, to thee I cling the rather,
Albeit I may not see thine awful face !"
Then I was sure he felt the strong embrace
Tighten around him, though a Skeleton
Came stalking from the night to lead them on :
A far-off murmur swelled into a wildering roar ;
A hurricane of flame and sand whirled like a conqueror !
And when the o'erwhelming terrible death-tempest
on them broke,
The shrinking child crept nestling close under the
Father's cloak.

Then darkness swallowed the portentous plain.
When faint it dawned upon mine eyes again,
Lo ! there was moonlight in a sky serene :
All lay at peace beneath the melancholy sheen.
No voice was heard, no living thing was seen.

Yet ere I was aware, that awful Apparition
Once more emerged upon my mortal vision—
The shrouded, dim, unutterable Form,
With eyes that flame as through the rifts of storm,
Mounted on that colossal Living Thing,
Bearing the child now, softly slumbering—
While all confused immeasurable shadow fling.
Peacefully lay the boy's pale, silent head :
And, looking long, I knew that he was dead.
Then all my wildered anguish forced a way
Through my wild lips : " Reveal, O Lord, I pray,
Whither Thou carriest him ! " I cried aloud :
No sound responded from the shadowy shroud ;
Only methought that something like a hand
Was raised to point athwart the shadowy land ;
And while afar the dwindling twain were borne,
I, gazing all around with eyes forlorn,
Divined the bloom of some unearthly morn !

Where was he carried ? to an isle of calm,
Lulled with sweet water and the pensile palm ?
Vanishing havens on the pilgrimage
Surely some more abiding home presage !
Or must the Sire attain always alone
The happy land, with never a living son ?
O ! awful, silent, everlasting One !
If thou must roam those islands of the west,
Ever with some dead child upon thy breast,
Who would have hailed the glory, being blest,
Eternity were one long moan for rest !
For do we not behold thee morn by morn,
Issuing from the East with one newborn,
Carrying him silently, none knoweth whither,
Knowing only all we travel swiftly thither ?

THE WATERNYMPH AND THE BOY.

HON. RODEN NOEL.

I LIVE in the heart of a limpid pool,
In the living limpid heart of a pool :
I lie in a flow of crystalline,
Where silvery fish with jewelled eyne
Float silent, and the ripple-gleam
With many a delicate water-dream
Moves the face of flowers to quaver,
Hanging where the wavelets waver ;
Daffodil, hyacinth, spring flowers,
Who slumber veiled from sunny showers,
That only trickle feebly through
Forest foliage from the blue.
My streamlet sparkles in the pines,
And here in lambent flame declines ;
For the sun has burst his leafy thrall,
Kissing it passionate in the fall.
I love to feel the water plash
Merrily into my pool,
With a swift reverberating flash
Of soft foam beautiful.
One brilliant surface shrines the sky,
Another young lit leaves on high,
While yet another shadowed o'er,
Below deep emerald, my floor
Reveals, all wavering below
My water's everlasting flow.
O the beautiful butterflies
That flutter where the runnel flies !

Silverly glistening over stones
Where yonder nightingale intones,
Where he flutes the livelong day,
Learning the water's liquid lay;
A lovelier rendering is heard
Fresh from the genius of a bird;
While emulous water vainly tries
To glisten like the glistening eyes
Of nightingales in vernal leaves,
Where yon rosebower softly heaves:
Soon will their mellifluent strain
Woo the rose to life again!

But surely there are lovelier things
Than these are with their cinnamon wings!
Whose grace hath more compelling spells
Than all mine azure damozels!
For as I lay in my pool one day,
A cloud released a gleam,
And the jewel heart of my home grew gay
With a glorifying beam.
There came a rustle in the trees:
I deemed a silver doe
Would sip the ripple of the breeze,
Wandering to and fro;
Listless I watched until he should
Arrive here from the shadowy wood.
It was no deer; it was a boy
Assailed and took my heart with joy!
Stealthily, daintily, he came,
Flooding all my sense with flame.
He was clad in a ruby dress,
That clung to his breathing loveliness,
While hose of opalescent silk
Revealed his delicate limbs of milk.

Shyly, timid as a doe,
He glanced if aught were near or no,
Then sought him out a pleasant spot
With clustering forget-me-not,
And leisurely upon the brink,
His jewelled raiment to unlink
Began ; that yielding made a way
For hungering eyes of mine to stray
In his fair bosom, velvet fine
Flushing it warmly as with wine,
Velvet and cambric lingering loth
To leave him, yet to faintness both
With warm white satiate, from whence
Stole overpowering my sense
Smooth boy-bosom, whose are twin
Rosebuds in a silky skin.

By slender fingers, where the pale
Moon rises in a rosy nail,
Cleared from all the lordly dress,
He shone with native loveliness !
Then pressed the grass with shrinking foot,
Strawberry blooms that promise fruit,
Windflower, violet and moss,
And taller flowers that love the loss
Of all their living gold upon
Those limbs unheeding any one :
And yet anon,
As he long blades of grassy gloss
Perplexed daintily disjoins,
A locust leaps upon his loins !
Now finding near a shelving rock,
Behold ! he cowers before the shock ;

Yet heated how he longs to lave
His beauty in my cooling wave !
His rounded ivory arms have met
Over locks of glossy jet :
Gracefully curls the form so fair
Now upon my yielding air ;
Cleaves my laughter-flashing wave,
Delighted one so soft and suave
To gulf within her glassy grave.
Lo ! many a clear aerial bubble
Tells the water-heart's sweet trouble !
He lips the ripple, pants and flushes,
Thrusts out white buoyant limbs, and pushes
With turning palm, a snowy swan
Lavishing his bosom upon
My mantling water in the sun !
Now hath he climbed beside the stone,
With filmy lichen overgrown,
Where small swift globes of water twinkle :
There among the periwinkle
Creeping, sidles with a shoulder
Pressed upon the verdured boulder,
Along a narrow ledge, to wet
His shining head within the jet
Of foam that skirts my clear cascade,
Leaning under, half-afraid.

All my close-clinging vision grew
Over him leaping forth anew :
He dives ; he rises ; I refrain :
He floats upon the shine again.
Luxuriant he lies afloat,
Half his form, and half his throat,

Clear from crystalline that sways
Him gently, with alluring haze
Veiling some of him from sight,
Filming less or more of white
Wrist or shoulder, as he moves
Fair on wavering water-groves,
Hearing a sweet long croon of doves.
Flying pansies, butterflies,
Moths aflame with crimson dyes,
Haunt his vague and violet eyes :
Odorous shadow of the trees,
Drowsy with a drone of bees,
Amorous nightingales enkindling
At intervals the air and dwindling,
Slim grey waterfall in plashing,
On my stone the wave in washing,
Sweetest music never ending,
Blending, never-ending,
Lulls him in his water-wending.

Why, boy-lover, tell me why
I was doomed to see thee lie,
I was doomed to see thee die,
Tell me why
Even I
Am singing now thy lullaby !
Hear my water sing thee now
A lullaby !

In thy jasmine throat meander
Tender lines of dimple,
And 'tis haunted where they wander,
While the waters wimple,
With a shy blue as from veins,
Where soft throat subsiding wanes

Into billowy bosom dreaming
Faintly of the roses ;
Whose dim dream a bud discloses
In the gleaming
Undulating almond skin,
Roses nascent soft therein.
Ah ! the quiet music of thy beauties undulating ;
Ah ! to feel, to feel, thy gentle warmth of bosom
palpitating :
What breath from heaven was breathing behind the
fairy flower,
Whose ample one white petal thy body had for dower,
Blowing so unerringly to mould thee as thou art,
Even so waving waist and limb, and the snow about
thy heart ?
And if my hands were ne'er to thrill, my beautiful,
my boy,
As they filled them with thy bosom, the treasure and
the joy,
Why along the ideal limit heaved thy delicate form,
So, nor any otherwise, languid, white and warm ?

I flung me round him,
I drew him under ;
I clung, I drowned him,
My own white wonder ! . . .

Father and mother,
Weeping and wild,
Came to the forest,
Calling the child,
Came from the palace,
Down to the pool,
Calling my darling,
My beautiful !

Under the water,
Cold and so pale !
Could it be love made
Beauty to fail ?

Ah ! me for mortals :
In a few moons,
If I had left him,
After some Junes
He would have faded,
Faded away,
He, the young monarch, whom
All would obey,
Fairer than day ;
Alien to springtime,
Joyless and grey,
He would have faded,
Faded away,
Moving a mockery,
Scorned of the day !
Now I have taken him
All in his prime,
Saved from slow poisoning
Pitiless Time,
Filled with his happiness,
One with the prime,
Saved from the cruel
Dishonour of Time.
Laid him, my beautiful,
Laid him to rest,
Loving, adorable,
Softly to rest,
Here in my crystalline,
Here in my breast !

A LITTLE CHILD'S MONUMENT.

1881.

HON. RODEN NOEL.

I.—LAMENT.

I AM lying in the tomb, love,
Lying in the tomb,
Tho' I move within the gloom, love,
Breathe within the gloom ;
Men deem life not fled, dear,
Deem my life not fled,
Tho' I with thee am dead, dear,
I with thee am dead,
O my little child !

What is the grey world, darling,
What is the grey world,
Where the worm is curled, darling,
The deathworm is curled ?
They tell me of the spring, dear !
Do I want the spring ?
Will she waft upon her wing, dear,
The joy-pulse of her wing,
Thy songs, thy blossoming,
O my little child !

For the hallowing of thy smile, love,
The rainbow of thy smile,
Gleaming for a while, love,
Gleaming to beguile !

Replunged me in the cold, dear,
Leaves me in the cold,
And I feel so very old, dear,
Very, very old !

Would they put me out of pain, dear,
Out of all my pain,
Since I may not live again, dear,
Never live again !

I am lying in the grave, love,
In thy little grave,
Yet I hear the wind rave, love,
And the wild wave !
I would lie asleep, darling,
With thee lie asleep,
Unhearing the world weep, darling,
Little children weep !
O my little child !

II.—THE KING AND THE PEASANT.

WORLD-WIDE possessions, populous lands
The monarch doth inherit,
And lordlier kingdoms he commands,
Fair realms within the spirit.
The monarch had a little son,
A child of five years old,
The loveliest earth ere looked upon ;
And he is lying cold.

The king is in the olive grove,
A hind sings in the tree ;
Below, the infant of his love
Is babbling merrily.

The father beats the boughs, and while
Dark oval olives fly,
The boy, with many a laugh and smile,
Pursues them far and nigh.
Blue sea between the grey-green leaves
Twinkles, and the sun
Through them a playful chequer weaves
Over the little one.

The monarch gazes all unseen,
Tears burning his wan eyes ;
Tenderly his love doth lean
To bless their Paradise,
As through black bars that foul the day,
And shut him out from joy :
Hear the world-envied monarch say,
" Perish, my bauble crown, my toy,
All the science, all the sway,
Power to mould the world my way,
Persuade to beauty the dull clay !
Take all ; but leave, ah ! leave my boy,
Give me back my life, my joy !
This poor rude peasant I would be,
Yet dare not breathe the wish that he
Were as I am, a king, of misery ! "

III.—MUSIC AND THE CHILD.

I.

AN organ-player comes rarely round
To our lone moorland place ;
My darling at the welcome sound
Runs with laughter in his face
To the nursery window, hailing,
With melodious mirth unfailing,
The sunburnt, black-bearded man,
Who greets him in Italian.
Then he brings and sets a chair,
Humming over every air,
Feigns to turn a handle deftly,
Feigns to talk Italian swiftly,
Fair in little blouse of blue,
Sweet of heart and form and hue.

II.

Pale, my love, with dews of anguish
From the night beneath his curls,
Lies asleep ; and while we languish
In despair, behold ! there purls
A rill of music from afar :
Can the favourite organ jar
So upon our hearts ? We fear
Lest it waken him ; yet hear
Him, waking, pray for it to come
Under the window of his room,
Asking that his friend, the player,
May have food ; we grant the prayer.
Then he lists to every tune,
Growing very weary soon.

III.

Baby lies upon the bed,
And our hearts with him lie dead.
Baby lies with fair white blossom
In his hair and hand and bosom :
Only he is lovelier far
Than earth's fairest flowers are !
And while we cower, smitten low
By our baby boy's death-blow,
Draws again the organ near . . .
Ah ! Baby never more may hear.

IV.

When the little child was going,
From his lips came softly flowing,
Flowing dreamily, the tune
Of a hymn that asks a boon
In childish accents of the Saviour,
Who, by the love in his behaviour,
Showed God cherishes a child ;
And whensoever pain made him wild,
His mother sang it ; then, released,
The child himself sang on, nor ceased
On earth till he commenced in heaven.
For I think that fatal even,
While upon death's wave he drifted,
While the mist of life was lifted,
On our earth-shore he heard his mother,
And pure angels on the other ;
We and they hearing the low voice of him who
travelled
Between us, darkling, a wee pilgrim who the
mystery unravelled !

Even so she sang to him,
While his lovely eyes grew dim,
In fair former eves, while he
Loosed waifs of singing dreamily,
Till he floated into sleep.
Now it is more strange and deep.
"Jesus," he murmured, hearing the Lord call :
"Fear not, My darling, on My heart to fall !"

v.

Then in the depth of our despair,
A vision found me lying there.
She and I were cowering
Before the swoop of Death's dark wing,
That, sweeping him to nothingness,
Plunged our souls in the abyss,
Stone-eyed to stare upon the gloom,
Frantic to challenge the deaf tomb,
Beating upon its iron door
For him who shall return no more !
Death echoing from his awful vault
In ghastly mockery of our assault !
Wanderers ever, wanting only one,
Calling upon the name of our lost little son !

But I dreamt that she and I
Were gazing very mournfully
On the organ, as we deemed
Disused and broken. Then it seemed
That his dear nurse, who loved him well,
And cherished more than I can tell,
Came unaware, and on her breast
She bore him whom we laid to rest,

Our darling, glorious, health-rosed,
Whose dark, dewy eyes reposed
On some far-off enrapturing vision
Of the children's realm elysian !
Ah ! with what transport we kissed him !
Not dead ! not dead ! howe'er we missed him !
Heaven, too, vouchsafes another token ;
The little organ was not broken !
Lo ! baby turns it round and round,
Rejoicing in the wonted sound,
Yea, singing in his blouse of blue,
Lovelier than we ever knew.

VI.

While he lay nightly racked with pain,
Wept and shrieked the hurricane.
Yea, on that terrible night he died,
The clamour of fell fiends, beside
Themselves with hell's blaspheming anger,
Exultant in his god-wept languor,
Seemed to hound him on to death,
Hungry for his innocent breath !
But now what raves it for, and howls
Around with moan of drifted souls !
Are ye not satiate with such
A pure white victim to your clutch,
Yielded by the Powers above,
Who yet we dare to dream are Love ?
The loveliest, most heavenly-hearted
Child ever by themselves imparted
To this poor earth of ours !

So moaning
In fierce despair, amid the groaning

Of those evil blasts I heard
A still small voice, as of a bird.
Nay, bird had ne'er so sweet a voice,
Nor ever bird may so rejoice ;
No spring that babbles in the summer,
Nor flower-enamoured fairy hummer !
What is it, Lord ? can it be human ?
Song of child, or song of woman ?
Some loving Ariel doth toy
In self-abandonment of joy !
Like, yet unlike our vanished angel !
I know I deem it an evangel
From my darling, hovering
In the very storm, to sing
Near my yearning soul, to tell
What seems the blasphemy of hell
Is love, to him who loveth well !

. . . In bluest air the melody
On silver wings appears to fly ;
And lo ! in live germander blue
A threefold flower-cluster flew,
Child-seraphim, arrayed in white,
Fair with dewy eyes of light ;
As when two swallows on the wing,
Circle each other dallying ;
In playful love we hear them cleaving
Blue air with dances they are weaving ;
So on tender pulsing pinion
Audibly the heaven's dominion
Many a threefold flower-band
Of children clove, while in their bland
Spirit-wreathing, when one passed,

Shadow delicate fell fast
From him upon a sister child,
Softening to mood more mild
Her raptured whiteness undefiled.

VII.

When the jubilant hymnals roam,
Buoyant-winged as sunny foam,
High-flung, wing-wafted, in the dome,
Or solemn-branched cathedral aisle,
From pure boy-bosoms, all the while
To me it seems my darling mingles
With the sound that burns and tingles,
Floating calm in the calm sea
Of all unshadowed harmony.
Holy, Holy, Holy ! mount
Arrowy song-flight from the fount
Of our earth-music ! that descending
Erst from heaven, will be blending
Now with his full songs of joy,
Who, lark-like, sings where no alloy
Of earth a gentle soul may trouble
In her perennial sweet bubble,
Whose lily petal ever fair
Reposes, feeding in live air.

IV.—“*THAT THEY ALL MAY BE ONE.*”

WHENE’ER there comes a little child,
My darling comes with him ;
Whene’er I hear a birdie wild
Who sings his merry whim,
Mine sings with him :
If a low strain of music sails
Among melodious hills and dales,
When a white lamb or kitten leaps,
Or star, or vernal flower peeps,
When rainbow dewes are pulsing joy,
Or sunny waves, or leaflets toy,
Then he who sleeps
Softly wakes within my heart ;
With a kiss from him I start ;
He lays his head upon my breast,
Tho’ I may not see my guest,
Dear bosom-guest !
In all that’s pure and fair and good,
I feel the spring-time of thy blood,
Hear thy whispered accents flow
To lighten woe,
Feel them blend,
Although I fail to comprehend.
And if one woundeth with harsh word,
Or deed, a child, or beast, or bird,
It seems to strike weak Innocence
Through him, who hath for his defence
Thunder of the All-loving Sire,
And mine, to whom He gave the fire.

LOVE LYRICS.

HON. RODEN NOEL.

I.—“*THE PITY OF IT.*”

IF our love may fail, Lily,
If our love may fail,
What will mere life avail, Lily,
Mere life avail !

Seed that promised blossom,
Withered in the mould,
Pale petals overblowing,
Failing from the gold !

When the fervent fingers
Listlessly uncloze,
May the life that lingers
Find repose, Lily,
Find repose !

Who may dream of all the music
Only a lover hears,
Hearkening to hearts triumphant
Bearing down the years ?
Ah ! may eternal anthems dwindle
To a low sound of tears ?

Room in all the ages
For our love to grow,
Prayers of both demanded
A little while ago :

And now a few poor moments,
Between life and death,
May be proven all too ample
For love's breath !

Seed that promised blossom,
Withered in the mould !
Pale petals overblowing
Failing from the gold !

I well believe the fault lay
More with me than you,
But I feel the shadow closing
Cold about us two.

An hour may yet be yielded us,
Or a very little more—
Then a few tears, and silence
For evermore, Lily,
For evermore !

II.—EARLY LOVE

OUR early love was only dream :
Still a dream too fair for earth,
Hallowed in a faint far gleam,
Where the fairest flowers have birth,
Let it rest ! no stain e'er trouble
Magic murmur, limpid bubble !

There two spirits in the calm
Of moonlight memory may go,
Finding pure refreshing balm,
When life traileth wounded, slow
Along dim ways of common dust,
As dull lives of mortals must.

Early love, fair fount of waters,
Ever by enchantment flowing,
Where two snakes, her innocent daughters,
Were wont to swim among the blowing,
Wilding flowers thou knowest well,
In the wood of our sweet spell !

Never Fear found out the place,
Never eyes nor feet profane !
Of our innocent youth and grace
Love was born ; if born to wane,
We will keep remembrance holy
From the soil of care and folly.

No weariness of life made wise,
No canker in the youngling bud,
No lustre failing from our eyes,
Nor ardour paling in the blood !
Neither ever seemed less fair
To the other playing there.

Still asleep, we drift asunder,
Who met and loved but in a dream ;
Nor kissing closely, woke to wonder
Why we are not what we seem !
Fairy bloom dies when we press
Wings young zephyr may caress.

Fare you well ! more might have been !
Nay, we know more might not be !
A moment only I may lean
On your bosom, ere you flee,
Ere the weary sultry day
Hide my morning and my May !

Yet a fairy fountain glistens
Under soft moon-lighted leaves,

And my wistful spirit listens
For a voice that glows and grieves,
Breathing, when my heart would fail,
Youth from yonder fairy vale,
Where sings a nightingale.

III.—LOVE HIDING.

LOVE was playing hide and seek,
And we deemed that he was gone,
Tears were on my withered cheek
For the setting of our sun ;
Dark it was around, above,
But he came again, my love !

Chill and drear in wan November,
We recall the happy spring,
While bewildered we remember
When the woods began to sing,
All alive with leaf and wing,
Leafless lay the silent grove ;
But He came again, my love !

And our melancholy frost
Woke to radiance in His rays,
Who wore the look of one we lost
In the far away dim days ;
No prayer, we sighed, the dead may move,
Yet he came again, my love !

Love went to sleep, but not for ever,
And we deemed that he was dead ;
Nay, shall aught avail to sever
Hearts who once indeed were wed ?
Garlands for his grave we wove,
But he came again, my love !

LONDON.

(FROM "A LAY OF CIVILISATION.")

HON. RODEN NOEL.

FROM where our patriot sailor on his column
Stands, with the lion of England at his feet,
Among the fountains, looking toward the towers,
The banded towers of Westminster, beyond
Green trees, by Thames, to Lambeth, London roars
Eastward, loud leagues of palaces for men
Who toil to accumulate, around the dome,
Where warrior Wellington by Nelson sleeps,
Flows to four towers, phantoms of the past,
In whose dread dungeons linger shadowy sighs
From ruined lives of all the slow sad years ;
On, where the navies largesse of world-wealth
Lavish on quays vociferous (yet we
Pine ever ailing, surfeited, unfed),
By that great arsenal of war-weapons,
Forged with tremendous clangour, to God's sea.

And westward, London roars round congregated
Palaces, where men squander. Of the crowds
Our eyes encounter, some are sorrowful,
Long unaccompanied of sweet Hope, the bride,
Withering mournful ; some are jubilant,
Sunny and strong with youth, or strenuous,
Of glad demeanour ; listless, languid these ;
But most are weary in this Babylon,
Whether men idle, or contend for bubbles ;

The happiest are they who minister.
Beyond these regions, reaches of dim street,
A sullen labyrinth of ill-omened hovels :
Ah ! dull, grey, grovelling populations, ye
That are rank human soil, wherein we force
Our poor pale virtues, and our venomous sins
Of gorgeous growth, our proxy-piety,
Official food, that yields no sustenance,
But chokes with outworn fantasy free life,
What hope, O people ? Red convulsive strife
With those whom circumstance made masters, then
Brief moaning silence under other lords ?
And yet what ask ye ? Sick men from a feast
Rise loathing ; health can relish his poor crust.
The pure soul hath her panoply of light,
In direst dungeon radiating heaven ;
Ensphered in her own atmosphere of joy
Sees no deformity ; while tyrants tread
Their marble halls, to find them torture-chambers ;
A graceless prison all his fair demesne
To some illiberal, illustrious fool.
Perchance ye, ground to powder in God's mill,
May serve more than who sleep in delicate death,
With rarest incense in the mummy-fold.

O whirling wheels ! O throngs of murmuring men !
Where is the goal of infinite endeavour ?
And where your haven, O ye fleeting faces ?
High Westminster, like some tall ghostly father
Of olden time, stands wildered, while for crowds
Of modern men, swift eddying at his feet,
His reverend grandeur void of consolation
Broods ; for no warriors, consecrated kings,
Kings who were crowned here through the centuries,

Nor bard, nor saint, emblazoned on the pane,
Canopied under marble in the aisle,
Whose shadowy memories haunt his heart, may help.
These are unsceptred ; time trends elsewhere ;
Their slumber is by channels long deserted !
His hoary towers, with melancholy eyes,
Dream in their own world, impotent for ours ;
Or if he speak, who may interpret now ?
He wakes in vain, who slept for centuries,
For he awakens in some alien world.

Doth Hope inhabit, then, the sister-pile,
Whose stately height hath grown to overshadow
That hoary minster ? This in sooth avails.
And yet methinks more health is in the old,
Renewing youth from fountains of the new,
Than in rash overthrow of all men built,
With salt of insolence sown in holy places.

Therefore, O secular, and sacred towers,
Confound your glories by the river-shore,
And marry mighty tones in ordering time !
Cathedral organ, roll insurgent sound,
As though the archangel would arouse the dead !
Our firm foundations on the invisible,
Build we the ever ampler, loftier state,
Till unaware we walk the City of God !
Yea, for I deem the fathers we revere,
Shrined in cathedral glooms, embolden us
With eyes of silent counsel, and dumb power,
Approving backs turned on their empty tomb.
But who may slay the irrevocable Past ?
The Past, our venerable Sire, that girds
Bright armour round us, like some grand old knight,

With benediction sending forth fair youth
To battle, crowning what himself began !

When England bathes in shadow, the tall tower
Of that great palace of the people shines,
Shines to the midnight like a midnight sun.
While crowned inherited incompetence,
And while law-making men laborious
Through long night-watches, in their golden chamber,
Wage wordy wars of faction, help the State,
The dreadful river rolls in darkness under,
Whirling our human lights to wild witch-gleam !
See yellow lamps in formidable gloom
Of both the shores, night-hearted haunts of men ;
Terrible water heaped about great piers
Of arches, gliding, gurgling, ominous !
But on the vasty parapet above
Those Titan tunnels, ghastlier for the glare
Of our electric mockery of moons,
Appears a moment a fate-hunted face—
Wan Desolation, plunging to the Void.
Then swirls a form dishonoured among gleams,
Which eddy as light-headed ; what was man,
With other offal flotsam, flounders, rolls.

But now for one who mused upon the bridge,
Of pier and arch tremendous, the huge reek,
And sin-breathed exhalations of the city,
Transfigured by an alchemy of power,
Burned with all colour ; the broad river rose
Aslant horizonward, and heavenward,
One calm aerial glory of still dream ;
Thronged habitations on the shadowy shore
Blend solemn, disembodied to a bloom

Ethereal, bathed in evening ; fair enchased,
Or diapered upon the delicate air,
Hull, mast, sail, tiny bark, or barge, or steamer,
Poised darkly in mid primrose of the tide,
Like carven fretwork on a golden shrine.
All monstrous hostels, with interminable
Glazed bulks that over-roof the clanging train,
And all our builded chaos doth repent,
Converting into beauty ; while I muse,
The mild, and modulated cadences
Of lemon fruit, shy violet, dove-down,
Deepen to very pomp and festival
Of dyes magnificent ; one diapason
Of hues resplendent, crimson, gold, and green,
And purple gorgeous, like robes of kings,
Or caves of sun-illumined sea-treasure,
Or glories blazoned in Cathedral aisle,
Heart of white lily, fruit of passion-flower,
Or fervid eagle-eyes ; a parable,
One nuptial-feast of marrying glow and gloom,
A wondrous parable of life through death !
While yonder haughty heights of Westminster,
Where once fierce feuds of our illustrious dead
Sleep reconciled in monumental calm,
Mary reposing by Elizabeth,
And where with throes of living loud debate
Are brought to birth the still behests of Heaven ;
With ancient consecrated privilege
Of lordly Lambeth on his stately sward ;
These, and the grand dome, and the four grim towers,
Haunted by phantoms of long-wandering crime,
And harbours thronged with navies of the world,
Glow fair a moment with supernal fire.

BEETHOVEN.

HON. RODEN NOEL.

THE mage of music, deaf to outward sound,
Rehearsing mighty harmonies within,
Waved his light wand ; the full aerial tides
Ebb'd billowing to rear of him, o'erwhelm'd
All listening auditors, engulph'd, and swept
Upon the indomitable, imperial surge
To alien realms, and halls of ancient awe,
Which are the presence-chambers of dim Death :
The grand departed haunt this mountain-sound !
Cliffs, and ravines, and torrent-shadowing pines,
A pomp of winds, and waters, and wild cloud
The enchanter raises : then the solemn scene
Evanishing, lo ! delicate soft calm
Of vernal airs, young leaflets, and blithe birds,
The cuckoo and the nightingale, with bloom
Of myriad flowers, and rills, and water-falls,
Or sunlit rains that twinkle through the leaves,
And odorous ruffled whirlpools of the rose.
Anon, some wondrous petal of a flower,
An ample velvet petal, slides along
A luminous air of summer, visibly
Mantling a vermeil glory in the blue ;
And now thin ice films clearest water ; now
Our youngest angel whispers out of heaven,
And all the choir of his companions
Let loose their rapture on swift sudden wings,
Sunshine released unhop'd-for from a cloud !
Slant rays of opal through the clerestory ;

Dawn over solemn heights of lonely snow,
Aerial dawn, that deepens into day ;
A congregating of white seraph throngs,
Who hold the realms of ether with white plume,
And with a sweet compulsion lift to heaven !
Ye, Harmonies, expand immeasurably
The temple of our soul, and yet are more,
Than earth can bear ; within the courts above
Ye may expatiate majestic,
Native, at home ! poor mortals hide their tears,
With caught breath, nor may follow : mountain stairs,
Platform on platform, ye aspire to God !
His infinite Soul who bore you is immortal,
And ours, in whom reverberates your appeal !
O music-marvel ! how your royal river
Mirrors our life ; there breathes exhaled from it
Sorrow and joy, and triumph and despair ;
Your eagle flight is through the infinite,
No barriers to prison from the immense.
Yours the large language of the heights of Heaven !
Now lonely prow, exploring realms unknown,
Unpiloted, beneath wan alien stars,
Your strain recalleth, keels of lonely thought,
Wandering in some sublime bewilderment,
To pioneer where all the world will go,
Now merry buoyancy, as of a boat,
That dips in billowy foam at morning tide.
Ye are alive with yearnings of young love,
Or sombre with immeasurable woe,
Sombre with all the terror of the world,
Wild with the awe and horror of the world,
Begloomed like seas empurpled under cloud,
Reeling and dark with horror of the wind,
Or pale, long heaving under a veiled moon.

Then, with the fading symphony, the master
Drooped, earthward fallen through mortal weariness,
From heights empyreal ; he faced the slaves
Now silent, with stilled instruments, who wrought
A fabric for his high imagination,
A chambered palace-pile of echoing sound,
A shadowy fane within the realms of sense.
Drear Silence seems to him to reign : when lo !
A touch, at which he turns ! the audience,
Vast, thronged, innumerable have risen before him !
Unhearing the loud storm of their applause,
He sees the tumult of their ocean joy
Thunderously jubilant, in eloquent eyes,
And flashing gems, waved kerchiefs, and moved feet !
So then the solitary master feels
The heart-clasp of our infinite human world,
And bows rejoicing not to be alone.

Ah ! brothers, let us work our work, for love
Of what the God in us prevails to do !
And if, when all is done, the unanswering void
And silence weigh upon our souls, remember
The music of a lonely heart may help
How many lonely hearts unknown to him !
The seeming void and silence are aware
With audience august, invisible,
Who yield thank-offering, encouragement,
And strong co-operation ; the dim deep
Is awful with the God in Whom we move,
Who moulds to consummation where we fail,
And saith, " Well done ! " to every faithful deed,
Who in Himself will full accomplish all.

THALATTA.

HON. RODEN NOEL.

LAND'S END, 1875.

WHEN Love is fading from thy path, a faint remembered gleam,
Whose wond'rous glory crowned thy crest in youth's triumphal morn,
When Friendship yields a willow-wand, once in Love's generous dream,
Leaned on with all thy weight of soul, defying doubt and scorn,
Once deemed inviolable, divine, an oaken staff, a stay,
Never to fail thee at thy need in all the perilous way;
When thou art tossed from surge to surge, a helpless waif of ocean,
While hell-born lusts and base-born gusts befool thee with vain motion;
When foolish wants and angers in ignoble eddies whirl
A human spirit, formed to front God's glory unashamed:
Nor any Cause colossal, like a catapult, may hurl
To splendid goals all powerful souls, chafing, unloved, unnamed:
Then, poet, seek alone resounding hollows of the sea,
And plunge thy sullen soul in ocean's grand immensity!
Dare to scale the water mountains! let them topple in loud ruin

O'er thee, lusty swimming from cliff-harbour'd
sandy coves ;
Though stress of tides impetuous threaten thine
undoing,
Or violent swirl of undertow where seething
emerald moves
Around rude reefs and promontories, menace with
swift death,
Confront the glorious wild Power, who plays with
human breath !
Yea, let thy reckless shallop dare seas rushing round
the caves,
Smite with straining oar the kindling heavy night
of waves !
Climb the sea-crag, hand and foot, little careful of a
fall !
Storm shall be thy requiem, fairy foam thy pall.
Ah ! mighty boisterous blown breath, your siren
song for me !
I quaff exhilarating draughts of wine from forth the
sea,
Soft seething masses of fair froth luring deliciously !
Vaporous blast ! voice of vast long sibilant sea-
thunder !
Bellowing explosions in abysmal cavern-halls !
Storm my sense with sound imperial, with a joy
sublime and wonder !
Throned aloft in perilous places unto me the Mother
calls.
Hear Her ! tremble not ! but echo to the glowing
spirit's core ;
It is Her voice ; Her sons rejoice ; they shout to
Her again :
By sacred river-fountains, in the desert blast, and roar

Of bounding cataracts, in forest, by foam-mountains
of the main,

In the grand Atlantic chaos, in his elemental war,
She converses; I have heard Her; I would hearken
evermore!

Ye, my brothers, loved and worshipped; all your
music rolls with hers!

Human sounds inform the wind that like a trumpet
stirs!

. . . Verily I deem I hear above the tumult of the
blast,

That takes my breath, and dashes all the salt spray
over me,

Not the sea-mew's cry, nor wind's wail,

. . . eerie tones of some who

passed,

Wailing in the wind's wail, shadows drifting deso-
lately;

For they say the drowned must wander on the
cliffs or on the wave,

Where the fatal moment plunged them in their
"wandering grave."

Travelling mountain range, following moun-
tain range!

Now the foremost wavering green crest begins to
smoke;

Breaks at one place, and suffers dark precipitous
change,

Arching slowly, solemnly; under where it broke

A heavy shadow haunteth the grim wall; till
emerald,

All the cliff falls over, tumbles a dead weight
Of crushed and crashing water

. . . yonder unenthralled,

A monstrous buffalo in headlong strong tumultuous
 hate,
 Plunging wild haired upon the rock! immense
 white tongues of fire
 Are hurled around, enshroud, envelope with a cloud;
 Lo! where springs to Heaven a fairy fretted spire!
 Or is it a wan warrior's arms thrown up in death's
 despair?
 Death-white, baffled in grey air! . . .
 Shattered upon his iron Doom in armoured onset
 there!
 Niagaras upthundering, foamy avalanches,
 Beetling, flickering huge crags of seething snowy
 spume,
 Wherein are caverns of green tint among pale coral
 branches,
 And white comets thwart more shadowy froth-pre-
 cipice's gloom!
 Dark founded isles evanish in the flying mountain
 tomb;
 Albeit their wave-sculptured forms defiantly abide
 Under grey vapours hurrying o'er the sombre tide:
 Torn from parent shores, around their pillared
 isolation
 Ocean revelling roars with terrible elation!
 Afar, in the dull offing of a furrowed sullen
 sea,
 O'er yon rock-rooted Pharos rises awfully,
 Like a Phantom, rises slowly a white cloud,
 Scales the lofty lanthorn where three human hearts
 are bowed,
 Bowed awhile, involved within the Sea-Plume that
 ascends,
 Swallowing a hundred feet of granite ere it bends.

Behold ! the sweep of mighty crags, whose
league-long fortress front,
Whose frowning granite arc defies with stature tall
and steep
Ocean's embattled billows : these have borne the
brunt
Of terrible assaults ! the cannon thunders, and a leap
Of smoke ascends the ramparts of a breached and
broken keep,
At each discharge :
The Titan targe hath pinnacle
and tower :
Or is the whole an organ for the surge to smite
with power,
That hath the turbulent storm-music for everlasting
dower ?
Cathedral Heights of Titans, hewn by colossal
Hands,
Millennial ministers of flood and frost, wild earth-
quake and fierce fire !
Lo ! where a porphyry portal of the mountain heart
expands,
Portentous shadowy buttress, weather-goldened
spire ;
There multitudinous waters wander greyly in the
gloom ;
Within the high sea-sanctuary a god dispenses
doom ;
In and out they wander, sombre courtiers by the
gate,
Where a dim Sea-Presence broodeth in solemn
sullen state—
Where no mortal breath dare whisper, only hollow
sounding surges,

A welter of wild waters with their melancholy dirges.

Behold they rave in echoing cave their wrath
rent long ago,

Rent for a lair, where grim Despair rolls shouldering
to and fro ;

To and fro they furious roll prodigious boulders,
Rounding them like pebbles with huge Atlantean
shoulders.

Beyond one vast rock-sentinel guarding the
awful court,

Surrounded and o'ershadowed by walls perpendi-
cular,

Before those palace-portals foamy serpents huge
resort,

Wallowing upon the wilderness, grey and cold afar ;
While among the tumbled boulders, before the giant
cave,

Robed in royal purple, royal raiment of the wave,
Lie crunched and shattered timbers, ribs of mighty
ships ;

Yea, and limbs of some who, craving one more kiss
of loving lips,

Were stifled in the violent froth, jammed beneath
black stones,

Whose glossy weed may dally with their coral-
crusted bones.

Tall, gaunt Phantom yonder, warding portals
of the night,

With silent, sweeping stature growing from the
eastern wall,

Lank long arms upraised, and curving with the
vasty cavern's height,

A beaked monster face between them, looking
downward to appal !

Art thou stone, or art thou spirit, fearful Shadow
weird and grey,
Daring mortals to advance beyond their precincts
of the day ?

 All the cliffs are shrouded to the waist, or
 only loom
Head and shoulders through a death-mist, but where
 the rollers boom
Their feet are bare and stern : pale sand I discern
Near their ruined grandeur ; a chrysoprase pale green
Narrow water isles it, with a restless flow ;
The tidal heave advances : cormorants of swarthy
 mien
Squat on rocks about the cave, or dive in deeps below.

 While sweet samphire, with tufted thrift,
 grows in clefts above,
Ever and anon a sound, with ominous power to move,
Wanders from the wilderness, a very mournful spell :
Through the wind and wave embroilment ever tolls
 a passing bell.
Whence the warning ? what imports it ? When I
 clamber, when I rest,
It seems to breathe foreboding in a fading air.
Is it from the sombre church in lonely glen deprest ?
There, by old cross and coffin-stone, on immemorial
 chair
Of rude grey granite, hoary ghosts in dark conclave
 may brood :
Nay ! but the tolling tolleth from the turbulent flood,
Not from where the giants hewed them vasty seats
 of solid rock,
Or Druid with poured human blood adored the
 Logan block :

Not from where the Cromlech ponderous, and hoary
 cirque remain,
 Though we know no more who reared them, Celt
 or Dane, or Athelstane ;
 Nor whose the mouldered dust in yonder urns of
 perished prime,
 Bard's, or warrior's, who flared a moment in the
 hollow Night of Time !
 —There on dreary moorland haunteth owl and
 raven ;
 There at moonrise hoots the rocky carn, to confound
 the craven,
 While fiends are hunting dark lost souls who are
 shut out from Heaven—
 The knell is knolled by wild white arms of surges
 ramping round
 The fatal reef, where mariners are drifted to be
 drowned !
 It is the Rundlestone ! He knolls for passing human
 souls :
 It is the voice of Doom from forth profound Eternity !
 Weird dragon forms, roughened in storms, a
 foamy beryl rolls
 Ever around you, dumb and blind stones, who con-
 front the sky !
 I feel that in your soul there slumbers a dim Deity.
 . . . Were it not better to dissolve this chaos of
 the mind,
 And in the twilight of your world long consolation
 find,
 Restoring the proud Spirit to your elemental Powers,
 Dying into cliff, and cloud, and snowdrift of sea
 flowers ?
 . . . Vanishes the storm-rack in the gleaming West :

A long wide chasm, glowing like a World of Rest,
O'er the dusk horizon opens, whereinto
Visionary domes arise, and towers of tender hue!
A holy realm of Silence, a city of deep Peace,
Where Death leads all poor prisoners who have
 won release!
Long ranks of high surges, heaving dark against the
 bright
Heaven, fall illumined 'thwart iron crags, whose
 frown relents to Light.

BYRON'S GRAVE.

HON. RODEN NOEL.

NAY! Byron, nay! not under where we tread,
Dumb weight of stone, lies thine imperial head!
Into no vault lethargic, dark and dank,
The splendid strength of thy swift spirit sank:
No narrow church in precincts cold and grey
Confines the plume, that loved to breast the day:
Thy self-consuming, scathing heart of flame
Was quenched to feed no silent coffin's shame!
A fierce, glad fire in buoyant hearts art thou,
A radiance in auroral spirits now;
A stormy wind, an ever-sounding ocean,
A life, a power, a never-wearying motion!
Or deadly gloom, or terrible despair,
An earthquake mockery of strong Creeds that were
Assured possessions of calm earth and sky,
Where doom-distraught pale souls took sanctuary,
As in strong temples. The same blocks shall build,
Iconoclast! the edifice you spilled,
More durable, more fair: O scourge of God,
It was Himself who urged thee on thy road;
And thou, Don Juan, Harold, Manfred, Cain,
Song-crowned within the world's young heart shalt reign!
Whene'er we hear embroiled lashed ocean roar,
Or thunder echoing among heights all hoar,
Brother! thy mighty measure heightens theirs,
While Freedom on her rent red banner bears
The deathless names of many a victory won,

Inspired by thy death-shattering clarion !
In Love's immortal firmament are set
Twin stars of Romeo and Juliet,
And their companions young eyes discover
In Cycladean Haidee with her lover.

May all the devastating force be spent ?
Or all thy godlike energies lie shent ?
Nay ! thou art founded in the strength Divine ;
The soul's immense eternity is thine !
Profound Beneficence absorbs thy power,
While Ages tend the long-maturing flower :
Our Sun himself, one tempest of wild flame,
For source of joy, and very life men claim
In mellowing corn, in bird, and bloom of spring,
In leaping lambs, and lovers dallying.
Byron ! the whirlwinds rended not in vain ;
Aloof behold they nourish and sustain !
In the far end we shall account them gain.

THE MODERN FAUST.

1888.

HON. RODEN NOEL.

I.

PAN.

FROM BOOK III., CANTO II.

“PAN is not dead, he lives for ever !
Mere and mountain, forest, seas,
Ocean, thunder, rippling river,
All are living Presences ;
Yea, though alien language sever,
We hold communion with these !
Hail ! ever young and fair Apollo !
Large-hearted, earth-enrapturing Sun !
Navigating night’s blue hollow,
Cynthia, Artemis, O Moon,
Lady Earth you meekly follow,
Till your radiant race be run ;
Pan is not dead !

“Earth, Cybele, the crowned with towers,
Lion-haled, with many a breast,
Mother-Earth, dispensing powers
To every creature, doth invest
With life and strength, engendering showers
Health, wealth, beauty, or withholds ;
Till at length she gently folds
Every child, and lays to rest !
Pan is not dead !

“Hearken ! rhythmic ocean-thunder !
Wind, wild anthem in the pines !
When the lightning rends asunder
Heavens, to open gleaming mines,
Vasty tones with mountains under
Talk where ashy cloud inclines . . .
Over hoar brows of the heights ;
Ware the swiftly flaming lights !
Pan is not dead !

“Whence the ‘innumerable laughter,’
All the dancing, all the glees
Of blithely buoyant billowed seas,
If it be not a sweet wafture
From joy of Oceanides ?
Whence the dancing and the glees,
In the boughs of woodland trees,
When they clap their hands together,
Hold up flowers in the warm weather ?
Gentle elfins of the fur,
Flowers, Venus’ stomacher,
Grey doves who belong to her,
Singing birds, or peeping bud,
Lucid lives in limpid flood,
Fishes, shells, a rainbow brood,
If Pan be dead ?

“Naiads of the willowy water !
Sylvans in the warbling wood !
Oreads, many a mountain daughter
Of the shadowy solitude !
Whence the silence of green leaves,
Where young zephyr only heaves

Sighs in a luxurious mood,
Or a delicate whisper fell
From light lips of Ariel,
If Pan be dead ?

“Wave-illumined ocean palaces,
Musically waterpaven,
Whose are walls enchased like chalices ;
Gemmed with living gems, a haven
For foamy, wandering emerald,
Where the waterlights are called
To mazy play upon the ceiling,
Thrills of some delicious feeling !
Sylph-like wonders here lie hid
In dim dome of Nereid ;
Tender tinted, richly hues,
Fair sea-flowers disclose their feelers
With a pearly morn imbued,
While to bather's open lid
Water fairies float, revealers
Of all the marvels in the flood,
And Pan not dead !

“We are nourished upon science ;
Will ye pay yourselves with words ?
Gladly will we yield affiance
To what grand order she affords
For use, for wonder ; yet she knows
No whit whence all the vision flows !
Ah ! sister, brother, poets, ye
Thrill to a low minstrelsy,
Never any worldling heard,
Ye who cherish the password,
Allowing you, with babes, to go

Within the Presence-chamber so
Familiarly to meet your queen ;
For she is of your kith and kin !
Ye are like him of old who heard
In convent garden the white bird ;
A hundred years flew over him
Unheeding ! All the world was dim ;
At length, unknown, he homeward came
To brethren, now no more the same ;
Then, at evening of that day,
Two white birds heavenward flew away ;
Pan is not dead !

" Spirit only talks with spirit,
Converse with the ordered whole,
However alien language blur it,
May only be of soul with soul.
In our image-moulding sense
We order varied influence
From the World-Intelligence ;
And if Nature feed our frame,
She may nourish pride or shame,
Holy, or unholy flame ;
Real forms the maniac sees,
Whom he cherisheth, or flees ;
Real souls the sleeper kens
In dreamland's eerie shadowed glens.
Pan is not dead !

" Every star and every planet
Feed the fire of Destiny ;
Or for good, or evil fan it,
Herè, Hermes, Hecate ;
By ruling bias, and career,
To all hath been assigned a sphere,

In realms invisible and here,
Obedience, administration
For individual or nation.
Ceres, Pluto, Proserpine
Are the years' youth, and decline,
Seasonable oil or wine,
Phantasmagory yours or mine ;
And if sense be fed by Nature,
With ne'er a show of usurpature
She may feed our spirit too,
And with hers our own imbue
Ruling influence from her,
Tallied with our character ;
Dionysus, Fauns may move
To revel, or the lower love,
Unrisen Ariel control,
Undine of yet unopened soul,
Fallen ghost invite to fall ;
Or She, who is the heart of all,
Uranian Aphrodite, whom
The world laid in a Syrian tomb
Under the name of Jesus, She
May dominate victoriously,
And Pan be dead !

“ Whence are plague, fog, famine, fevers,
Blighting winds, and ‘ weather harms ’ ?
Are sorceries malign the weavers,
Through inaudible ill charms ?
Disease, confusion, haunting sadness,
Lust, delirium, murder, madness,
Cyclone, grim earthquake, accident,
In some witch-cauldron brewed and blent ?
Now I see the open pit ;

Abaddon flameth forth from it !
Like lurid smoke the fiends are hurled
Abroad now to confound the world !
Disordered minds
Howl, shriek, wail in the wailing winds !
Pan is not dead !

“ Whence the gentle thought unbidden,
Resolve benign, heroic, just,
Lovely image of one hidden,
Higher cherished, lower chidden,
Self downtrodden in the dust ?
Silent hand of consolation
On the brows of our vexation,
On the burning brows of sorrow ?
Much of all, be sure, we borrow
For that Profound of ours within,
From our holy kith and kin !
Pan is not dead !

“ Warmth and light from shielding, sheeny
Wings of angels, or Athene,
Call the Guardian what you will,
Impelling, or consoling still !
While if to Christ, or Virgin mother,
Hate, greed, offer prayer, no other
Than Belial, Mammon, Ashtaroth
Draw nigh to hear, and answer both :
When lurid-eyed priest waves the cross
For slaughter, gain that is but loss
Demons contemptuously toss !
What though ye name the evil clan
Typhon, Satan, Ahriman,
Pan is not dead !

" Their bodies are the shows of nature,
Their spirits far withdrawn from ours ;
We vary in our nomenclature
For the Demiurgic Powers,
To whom high duties are assigned
In our economy of mind,
As in our mortal order ; they
Lead souls upon their endless way ;
From whom the tender, sweet suggestion
Arrives uncalled, unheralded,
Illumination, haunting question,
Approval, blame from some one hid,
Perchance from one we count as dead ;
Our eyes are holden ; they are near,
Who oftenwhile may see and hear !
By the auroral gate of birth,
In the youthful morning mirth,
At the portal of dim death
Their guardianship continueth ;
Pan is not dead ! . . .

" Ah ! why then thrilled in the Egæan
The choral wail, the loud lament,
Confusion of the gods Idæan,
Dire defeat, and banishment ?
When the lowly young Judæan
Dying head on cross had bent,
' Great Pan is dead ! '
Sun, and Moon, and Earth, and Stars,
Serene behind our cloudy bars,
With the Magi from the East,
Yield glad homage to the Least,
Offer myrrh, and gold, and gem
Before the Babe of Bethlehem,
Now Pan is dead !

“ Yea, before the wondrous story
Of loving, self-surrendering Man
Paled the world’s inferior glory,
Knelt the proud Olympian ;
Then the darkness of the cross
Enthroned supreme Love’s utter loss ;
Then Ambition, Pride, and Lust
Into nether hell were thrust,
And Pan was dead !
The loveliness of Aphrodite
Waned before a lovelier far,
Fainting in the rays more mighty
Of the bright and Morning Star ;
(Lovely will to give and bless
Maketh form and feature less)
Young-eyed Erôs will sustain
His triumph, following in His train ;
Kings conquered by One more Divine
In the courts imperial shine,
Thralls owing fealty to Him,
Who dying left their glory dim ;
Feudatories, ranged in splendour,
Sworn high services to render,
With lions, leopards, fawning mild,
And drawn swords round a Little Child !
Pan, Pan is dead !

“ For while the dawn expands, and heightens
Greater gods arrive to reign,
Jupiter dethrones the Titans,
Osiris rules the world again,
But in a more majestic guise ;
Sinai thunders not, nor lightens,
Eagle, sun-confronting eyes

Veils before mild mysteries !
Balder, Gautama, full-fain
Pay humble tribute while they wane ;
All the earlier Beauty prone is
Before a lovelier than Adonis !
Till even the Person of our Lord,
In yonder daylight of the Spirit,
On all the people to be poured
By the dear influence of His merit,
Will fade in the full summer-shine
Of all grown Human, and Divine,
And every mode of worship fall,
Eternal God be all in all ;
Pan lives, though dead ! ”

II.

RAGNAROK.

. (A SELECTION.)

FROM BOOK IV.

YOUNG-EYED gods, ah ! ye were beautiful in May
time !

Now, in burning lurid gloom of dying day,
Ye are withered, looking old, and wan and weary,
While your pale priest mutters palsied by the altar,
Your altar hurled asunder with contumely,
And a roll of smothered wrath from underground !
Your wild worshippers entreat you at your shrine ;
But in burning, lurid gloom of dying day,
Lo ! ye reeling fall upon them !

Bells clang jingling-jangling in the steeples,
Drunken steeples, flickering like fire,
Thunder rumbles in the dungeons of the earth-god

And the gaping earth gulphs all !
Lo ! the masquers, and the mummers, in confusion,
Hurrying panic-stricken through the highway,
In disordered gala dresses from the revel,
With the lions, panthers, horses from the show,
Shaking scared, with their man-tamers, while the
flowers

Are strewn about the pavement where they fell
From the white hands of inebriates who threw them,
Mad with orgy, mad with joy !

Sinuous wine from tumbled goblet dyes the palace ;
And the men want not the women any longer ;
Flimsy booths of the gay fair are all awry ;
No resounding more of brazen vaunting accents
From the humorous showman showing off the
monster ;

The man of motley runneth swiftly flying. . . .

Lo ! the guillotine is reared ! the tocsin threatens !
Men with rude gnarled arms, and rags, and gory
bosoms,

Red and rough as dragons, butcher grimly. . . .
Earth, a Pandemonium. . . .

All an infinite flood of night, with ne'er a refuge,
A roaring, ravening flood, with ne'er an ark,
Nor a dove with leaf of olive !

Sick abortions of the maddened brain colliding
Grapple one another in the gloom,
Going under, with the drifting wrecks of empire,
Orders, faiths, and commonwealths that shock to-
gether,

Mutually destroying, as the armed men
Sprung from dragon's teeth of old. . . .

O Ragnarok, O twilight
Of the gods, a world confounded !

Sir Alfred Austin.

1835.

ALFRED AUSTIN, poet, journalist, and pamphleteer, was born at Headingley, near Leeds, on May 30th, 1835. His father and mother were Catholics. He was educated at Stoneyhurst, and at St. Mary's College, Oscott, and in 1853 took a degree at the University of London. In 1854 he published "Randolph," a poem inspired by his life-long sympathy with Poland and hatred of Russia. He studied for the law, and in 1857 was called to the bar, but he soon gave himself wholly to journalism and literature. In 1858 he published "Five Years of It," a clever, if a somewhat crude novel, showing markedly the influence of his favourites, Disraeli and Bulwer Lytton. "The Season: a Satire," appeared in 1861, and was attacked with extreme bitterness by a number of critics, to whom its author made a telling reply in "My Satire and its Censors." "Interludes" was published in 1862, as was likewise "The Human Tragedy," a work which was speedily recalled, and which was given to the world in an altered form in 1876. The tragedy of "Savonarola" appeared in 1881, and was followed by "Soliloquies" in 1882, "At the Gate of the Convent" in 1885, and the fine dramatic poem "Prince Lucifer" in 1887. Mr. Austin is one of the ablest of journalists. He has written for the *Standard*, the *Quarterly Review*, the *Fortnightly*

Review, and the *Contemporary Review*, and has edited the *National Review* since 1883. A keen politician, he has twice contested a seat in the Conservative interest. He is the author of various political pamphlets, the most notable being a reply to Mr. Gladstone's "Bulgarian Horrors." He is a very dangerous antagonist, for he has eloquence and wit, and is master of an unusually vigorous and incisive style. He is a critic of no mean ability, and it is to be regretted that much of his work—as, for example, the delightful paper on the interpretation of Nature in poetry, which he contributed some years ago to the *Contemporary Review*—should remain interred in the back numbers of magazines. For he is never dull, always thoughtful and suggestive; and in his controversial moods he be-rates his opponents with a vivacity and pungency most refreshing to a reader who can enjoy hard-hitting in a literary scrimmage.

As a poet Mr. Austin has set a commendable example to many of his contemporaries in the purity of his style. He writes sound, unaffected English; his meaning is always transparent. He has not sought to emulate Tennyson's exquisite elaboration of diction; his lines are seldom jewelled by "curious felicities." But they are always graceful, and sometimes admirably vigorous and hearty. He has succeeded in lyrical, in narrative, and in dramatic poetry. As a lyrist, he does not seek after novel forms and ingeniously woven harmonies. His measures are simple, and the music is sweet and sustained in its flow. In proof of his fine lyric gift it is enough to turn to the two contrasted poems here given as samples of his workmanship—the fiery battle poem, "The Last Redoubt," and the exquisite

"Night in June"—a poem breathing the truest, tenderest sentiment, and bathed in the voluptuous beauty of a summer moonlight silvering leafage and flowers. Now and then he writes verses in which the manner of the Elizabethan song-writers is somewhat closely reproduced :—

"The crab, the bullace, and the sloe,
 They burgeon in the Spring;
 And when the west wind melts the snow,
 The redstarts build and sing.
 But Death's at work in rind and root,
 And loves the green buds best;
 And when the pairing music's mute,
 He spares the empty nest.

Death! Death!

Death is master of lord and clown;
 Close the coffin and hammer it down.

* * * * *

When logs about the house are stacked,
 And next year's hose is knit,
 And tales are told and jokes are cracked,
 And faggots blaze and spit;
 Death sits down in the ingle-nook,
 Sits down and does not speak:
 But he puts his arm round the maid that's warm,
 And she tingles in the cheek.

Death! Death!

Death is master of lord and clown;
 Shovel the clay in, tread it down."

One of the charms of his poetry lies in the freshness and vividness of his descriptions of Nature. He has dealt powerfully with the grandeurs of Alpine scenery, but his happiest pictures are of English fields and woods. He is one of the fieriest of patriots; love of England and hatred of despotism inspiring much of his strongest, most characteristic work—as witness the stirring verses "Is Life worth

Living ?" He has dramatic insight and the gift of creating character. His best play is, perhaps, "Prince Lucifer." The characters are highly idealised, but the breath of life is in each ; and two of them, the Prince and the Count Abdiel, are admirably drawn and admirably contrasted figures. The dialogue is natural as well as highly poetical and pregnant with thought. The play is instinct with idyllic grace, and conveys a shrewd criticism of life. It likewise contains several of Mr. Austin's finest lyrics. But for all its beauties it labours under the disadvantages inevitable in the case of every closet drama ; and it is by his lyrics that its author will be longest remembered. A collected edition of his poems was issued by Messrs. Macmillan in six volumes in 1892, to which other volumes have been added since.

Mr. Alfred Austin was appointed Poet Laureate January, 1896.

WALTER WHYTE.

A NIGHT IN JUNE.

ALFRED AUSTIN.

LADY ! in this night of June,
Fair, like thee, and holy,
Art thou gazing at the moon
That is rising slowly ?
I am gazing on her now :
Something tells me, so art thou.

Night hath been when thou and I
Side by side were sitting,
Watching o'er the moonlit sky
Fleecy cloudlets flitting.
Close our hands were linked then ;
When will they be linked again ?

What to me the starlight still,
Or the moonbeams' splendour,
If I do not feel the thrill
Of thy fingers slender ?
Summer nights in vain are clear,
If thy footstep be not near.

Roses slumbering in their sheaths
O'er my threshold clamber,
And the honeysuckle wreathes
Its translucent amber
Round the gables of my home :
How is it thou dost not come ?

If thou camest, rose on rose
From its sleep would waken ;
From each flower and leaf that blows
Spices would be shaken ;
Floating down from star and tree,
Dreamy perfumes welcome thee.

I would lead thee where the leaves
In the moon-rays glisten ;
And, where shadows fall in sheaves,
We would lean and listen
For the song of that sweet bird
That in April nights is heard.

And when weary lids would close
And thy head was drooping,
Then, like dew that steeps the rose,
O'er thy languor stooping,
I would, till I woke a sigh,
Kiss thy sweet lips silently.

I would give thee all I own,
All thou hast would borrow,
I from thee would keep alone
Fear and doubt and sorrow.
All of tender that is mine,
Should most tenderly be thine.

Moonlight ! into other skies,
I beseech thee wander.
Cruel thus to mock mine eyes,
Idle, thus to squander
Love's own light on this dark spot ;—
For my lady cometh not !

PRIMROSES.

ALFRED AUSTIN.

I.

LATEST, earliest, of the year,
Primroses that still were here,
Snugly nestling round the boles
Of the cut down chestnut poles,
When December's tottering tread
Rustled 'mong the deep leaves dead,
And with confident young faces
Peeped from out the sheltered places
When pale January lay
In its cradle day by day,
Dead or living, hard to say ;
Now that mid-March blows and blusters,
Out you steal in tufts and clusters,
Making leafless lane and wood
Vernal with your hardihood.
Other lovely things are rare,
You are prodigal as fair.
First you come by ones, and ones,
Lastly in battalions ;
Skirmish along hedge and bank,
Turn old Winter's wavering flank ;
Round his flying footsteps hover,
Seize on hollow, ridge, and cover,
Leave nor slope nor hill unharried,
Till, his snowy trenches carried,
O'er his sepulchre you laugh,
Winter's joyous epitaph.

II.

This, too, be your glory great,
Primroses, you do not wait,
As the other flowers do,
For the Spring to smile on you,
But with coming are content,
Asking no encouragement.
Ere the hardy crocus cleaves
Sunny borders 'neath the eaves ;
Ere the thrush his song rehearse,
Sweeter than all poets' verse ;
Ere the early bleating lambs
Cling like shadows to their dams ;
Ere the blackthorn breaks to white,
Snowy-hooded anchorite ;
Out from every hedge you look,
You are bright by every brook,
Wearing for your sole defence
Fearlessness of innocence.
While the daffodils still waver,
Ere the jonquil gets its savour ;
While the linnets yet but pair,
You are fledged, and everywhere.
Nought can daunt you, nought distress,
Neither cold nor sunlessness.
You, when Lent sleet flies apace,
Look the tempest in the face
As descend the flakes more slow,
From your eyelids shake the snow,
And, when all the clouds have flown,
Meet the sun's smile with your own.
Nothing ever makes you less
Gracious to ungraciousness.

March may bluster up and down,
Pettish April sulk and frown ;
Closer to their skirts you cling,
Coaxing Winter to be Spring.

III.

Then, when your sweet task is done,
And the wild-flowers, one by one,
Here, there, everywhere do blow,
Primroses, you haste to go,
Satisfied with what you bring,
Fading morning-stars of Spring.
You have brightened doubtful days,
You have sweetened long delays,
Fooling our enchanted reason
To miscalculate the season.
But when doubt and fear are fled,
When the kine leave wintry shed,
And 'mong grasses green and tall
Find their fodder, make their stall ;
When the wintering swallow flies
Homeward back from southern skies,
To the dear old cottage thatch
Where it loves to build and hatch,
That its young may understand,
Nor forget, this English land ;
When the cuckoo, mocking rover,
Laughs that April loves are over ;
When the hawthorn, all ablowl,
Mimics the defeated snow ;
Then you give one last look round,
Stir the sleepers underground,

Call the campion to awake,
Tell the speedwell courage take,
Bid the eyebright have no fear,
Whisper in the bluebell's ear
Time has come for it to flood
With its blue waves all the wood,
Mind the stitchwort of its pledge
To replace you in the hedge,
Bid the ladysmocks good-bye,
Close your bonnie lids and die;
And, without one look of blame,
Go as gently as you came.

THE LAST NIGHT.

ALFRED AUSTIN.

SISTER, come to the chestnut toll,
And sit with me on the dear old bole,
Where we oft have sate in the snow and the rain,
And perhaps I never shall sit again.

Longer and darker the shadows grow :
'Tis my last night, dear. With the dawn I go.

Oh the times, and times, we two have played
Alone, alone, in its nursing shade.
When once we the breadth of the park had crossed,
We fancied ourselves to be hid and lost
In a secret world that seemed to be
As vast as the forests I soon shall see.

Do you remember the winter days
When we piled up the leaves and made them blaze,
While the blue smoke curled in the frosty air,
Up the great wan trunks that rose gaunt and bare,
And we clapped our hands, and the rotten bough
Came crackling down to our feet, as now ?

But dearer than all was the April weather,
When off we set to the woods together,
And piled up the lap of your clean white frock
With primrose, and bluebell, and ladysmock,
And notched the pith of the sycamore stem
Into whistles. Do you remember them ?

And in summer you followed me fast and far—
How cruel and selfish brothers are!—
With tottering legs, and with cheeks aflame,
Till back to the chestnut toll we came,
And rested and watched the long tassels swing
That seemed with their scent to prolong the Spring.

And in Autumn 'twas still our favourite spot,
When school was over and tasks forgot,
And we scampered away and searched till dusk
For the smooth bright nuts in the prickly husk,
And carried them home, by the shepherd's star,
Then roasted them on the nursery bar.

O, Winnie, I do not want to go
From the dear old home ; I love it so.
Why should I follow the sad sea-mew
To a land where everything is new,
Where we never bird-nested, you and I,
Where I was not born, but perhaps shall die ?

No ; I did not mean that. Come, dry your tears,
You may want them all in the coming years.
There's nothing to cry for, Win : be brave.
I will work like a horse, like a dog, like a slave,
And will come back long ere we both are old,
The clods of my clearing turned to gold.

But could I not stay and work at home,
Clear English woods, turn up English loam ?
I shall have to work with my hands out there,
Shear sheep, shoe horses, put edge on share,
Dress scab, drive bullocks, trim hedge, clean ditch,
Put in here a rivet and there a stitch.

It were sweeter to moil in the dear old land,
And sooth, why not ? Have we grown so grand ?
So grand ! When the rear becomes the van,
Rich idleness makes the gentleman.
Gentleman ! What is a gentleman now ?
A swordless hand and a helmless brow.

Would you blush for me, Win, if you saw me there
With my sleeves turned up and my sinews bare,
And the axe on the log come ringing down
Like a battering-ram on a high-walled town,
And my temples beaded with diamond sweat,
As bright as a wealth-earned coronet ?

And, pray, if not there, why here ? Does crime
Depend upon distance, or shame on clime ?
Will your sleek-skinned plutocrats cease to scoff
At a workman's hands, if he works far off ?
And is theirs the conscience men born to sway
Must accept for their own in this latter day ?

I could be Harry's woodreeve. Who should scorn
To work for his House, and the eldest-born ?
I know every trunk, and bough, and stick,
Much better than Glebe, and as well as Dick.
Loving service seems banned in a' monied age,
Or a brother's trust might be all my wage.

Or his keeper, Win ? Do you think I'd mind
Being out in all weathers, wet, frost, or wind ?
Because I have got a finer coat,
Do I shrink from a weasel or dread a stoat ?
Have I not nailed them by tens and scores
To the pheasant-hutch and the granary doors ?

Don't I know where the partridge love to hatch,
And wouldn't the poachers meet their match ?
A hearty word has a wondrous charm,
And, if not—well, there's always the stalwart arm.
Thank Heaven ! spite pillows and counterpanes,
The blood of the savage still haunts my veins.

They may boast as they will of our moral days,
Our mincing manners and softer ways,
And our money value for everything,
But he who will fight should alone be king;
And when gentlemen go, unless I'm wrong,
Men, too, will grow scarce before very long.

There, enough! let us back. I'm a fool, I know;
But I *must* see Gladys before I go.
Good bye, old toll. In my log-hut bleak,
I shall hear your leaves whisper, your branches creak,
Your wood-quests brood, your wood-peckers call,
And the shells of your ripened chestnuts fall.

Harry never must let the dear old place
To a stranger foot and a stranger's face.
He may live as our fathers lived before,
With a homely table and open door.
But out on the pomp the upstart hires,
And that drives a man from the roof of his sires!

I never can understand why they,
Who founded thrones in a braver day,
Should cope with the heroes of 'change and mart,
Whose splendour puts rulers and ruled apart,
Insults the lowly and saps the State,
Makes the servile cringe, and the manly hate.

You will write to me often, dear, when I'm gone,
And tell me how everything goes on;
If the trout spawn well, where the beagles meet,
Who is married or dies in the village street;
And mind you send me the likeliest pup
Of Fan's next litter. There, Win, cheer up!

THE LAST REDOUBT.

ALFRED AUSTIN.

KACELYEVO'S slope still felt
The cannon's bolt and the rifles' pelt;
For a last redoubt up the hill remained,
By the Russ yet held, by the Turk not gained.

Mehemet Ali stroked his beard ;
His lips were clenched and his look was weird ;
Round him were ranks of his ragged folk,
Their faces blackened with blood and smoke.

"Clear me the Muscovite out !" he cried,
Then the name of "Allah !" echoed wide,
And the rifles were clutched and the bayonets lowered,
And on to the last redoubt they poured.

One fell, and a second quickly stopped
The gap that he left when he reeled and dropped ;
The second,—a third straight filled his place ;
The third,—and a fourth kept up the race.

Many a fez in the mud was crushed,
Many a throat that cheered was hushed,
Many a heart that sought the crest
Found Allah's throne and a houri's breast.

Over their corpses the living sprang,
And the ridge with their musket-rattle rang,
Till the faces that lined the last redoubt
Could see their faces and hear their shout.

In the redoubt a fair form towered,
That cheered up the brave and chid the coward ;
Brandishing blade with a gallant air,
His head erect and his temples bare.

"Fly! they are on us!" his men implored ;
But he waved them on with his waving sword.
"It cannot be held ; 'tis no shame to go !"
But he stood with his face set hard to the foe.

Then clung they about him and tugged and knelt.
He drew a pistol from out his belt,
And fired it blank at the first that set
Foot on the edge of the parapet.

Over, that first one toppled ; but on
Clambered the rest till their bayonets shone,
As hurriedly fled his men dismayed,
Not a bayonet's length from the length of his blade.

"Yield !" But aloft his steel he flashed,
And down on their steel it ringing clashed ;
Then back he reeled with a bladeless hilt,
His honour full, but his life-blood spilt.

Mehemet Ali came and saw
The riddled breast and the tender jaw.
"Make him a bier of your arms," he said,
"And daintily bury this dainty dead !"

They lifted him up from the dabbled ground ;
His limbs were shapely and soft and round.
No down on his lip, on his cheek no shade ;—
"Bismillah !" they cried, "'tis an Infidel maid !"

“Dig her a grave where she stood and fell,
'Gainst the jackal's scratch and the vulture's smell.
Did the Muscovite men like their maidens fight,
In their lines we had scarcely supped to-night.”

So a deeper trench 'mong the trenches there
Was dug, for the form as brave as fair ;
And none, till the Judgment trump and shout,
Shall drive her out of the Last Redoubt.

SONNETS.

ALFRED AUSTIN.

I.—LOVE'S BLINDNESS.

NOW do I know that love is blind, for I
Can see no beauty on this beateous earth,
No life, no light, no hopefulness, no mirth,
Pleasure nor purpose, when thou art not nigh.
Thy absence exiles sunshine from the sky,
Seres Spring's maturity, checks Summer's birth,
Leaves linnet's pipe as sad as plover's cry,
And makes me in abundance find but dearth.
But when thy feet flutter the dark, and thou
With orient eyes dawnest on my distress,
Suddenly sings a bird on every bough,
The heavens expand, the earth grows less and less,
The ground is buoyant as the ether now,
And all looks lovely in thy loveliness.

II.—LOVE'S WISDOM.

NOW on the summit of Love's topmost peak
Kiss we and part ; no farther can we go :
And better death than we from high to low
Should dwindle, or decline from strong to weak.
We have found all, there is no more to seek ;
All have we proved, no more is there to know ;
And time could only tutor us to eke
Our rapture's warmth with custom's afterglow.
We cannot keep at such a height as this ;
For even straining souls like ours inhale
But once in life so rarefied a bliss.
What if we lingered till love's breath should fail !
Heaven of my Earth ! one more celestial kiss,
Then down by separate pathways to the Vale.

Richard Garnett.

1835.

RICHARD GARNETT, the son of the Rev. Richard Garnett, was born at Lichfield on the 27th of February, 1835, and was educated privately. At the age of sixteen he entered the British Museum as an assistant in the Printed Book Department, of which he was appointed Keeper at the beginning of 1890. From 1875 to 1884 he had been Superintendent of the Reading Room, and had carried the general catalogue through the press from 1881 until his appointment as Keeper. He retired in 1899, and has since resided at Hampstead. The most important of the numerous remarkable acquisitions made for the Library during his term of office are commemorated in a volume by Messrs. Pollard and Proctor, entitled "Three Hundred Notable Books." In 1883 the University of Edinburgh conferred upon him the degree of LL.D., and he was made a C.B. in 1895.

Mr. Garnett's first book was an anonymous volume entitled "Primula and other Lyrics," the authorship of which was acknowledged in the preface to "Io in Egypt, and other Poems," published in the following year. To 1862 belongs "Poems from the German," to 1869, "Idylls and Epigrams, chiefly from the Greek Anthology," republished as "A Chaplet from the Greek Anthology," in 1892. In 1890 appeared "Iphigenia in Delphi"; in 1896, "One hundred and twenty

four sonnets from Dante, Petrarch, and Camoens," in 1901, "The Queen, and other Sonnets," and in 1904, "William Shakespeare, Pedagogue and Poacher," a drama in blank verse. A short excerpt from this last work is conveniently inserted here:—

“SHAKESPEARE.

Sir Thomas, I will stand your friend at Court :
On two conditions, one that presently
You do unclothe the path you stopped last Christmas :
Next, that although the noble Earl of Leicester
Your sentence doth annul, yet, by his favour,
Two parts revoked, you amplify the third,
And banish me from Stratford for ten years.

LEICESTER.

What moveth thee to this ?

SHAKESPEARE.

My Lady Lucy

Surmiseth shrewdly, so doth Mistress Shakespeare.
And I myself would set division
Between my past and future, signifying
The new life to be led. Too long I 've lingered
In my dark morning hours, but, now the sun
Of regal favour rises on my path,
Needs must I follow this to glorious noonday,
And then, unto my native place reverting,
Which ne'er was aught but dear to me, or shall be,
There, slowly through the golden hours declining,
Will set in splendour, like the westering sun,
But, unlike him, in the same zone and region
Where origin I had.

LEICESTER.

'Tis nobly spoken,
And know the Earl of Leicester for thy friend,
Not less than her great Majesty, and able
To ope yet wider worlds to thee. The quarrel
'Twixt Spain and England draweth to a head,
And soon the world shall ring with it, and then

The Hollander and we in union vanquish,
Or separate perish. This we know, and soon
The verdant level and the slow canal
Shall bristle with our pikes, throb with our drums,
Stream with our banners, and reverberate
The thunder of our cannon. I shall fill
The regent's seat, and my imperious truncheon
Shall beck thee to my retinue, to gather
Stuff for thy art by practice of the world.
What various shapes shall crowd the tented field!
Soldier and sutler, merchant, peasant, spy ;
Captains courageous, English amazons,
Whom deaths of lovers slain most treacherously
Impel to hurl the Dons to Devildom ;
Dicer and cut-purse, page, groom, beggar, minstrel ;
Courtesans, fortune-tellers, desperadoes ;
Armourers and devisers of strange engines ;
And knights too corpulent to fight or fly.
And other matter shalt thou find, arrays
Of marching hosts, pent cities, trenched leaguers,
Sallies, alarms, encounters, skirmishes,
Duels and deaths, and, chief of all, examples
Most noble, in whose brightness thou may st sit,
And as an eagle preen thee in the sun,
Purging all soilure haply gathered here ;
For know, my nephew Sidney tends my person,
Mirror of courtesy and chivalry.

The poems of 1859 were republished in 1893 with numerous additions and omissions.

While, however, Dr. Garnett's contributions to poetical literature have been far from voluminous, he has not failed to earn other laurels in other fields. He has shown the width of his poetic sympathy and the extent of his culture in many an elegant translation, especially from the Greek Anthology and the Italian poets ; and to his qualities as an editor and anthologist, let the lovers of Shelley, De Quincey, and Coventry Patmore bear witness. He has, moreover, produced some of the best of short biographies, notably that of

Thomas Carlyle in the "Great Writers" series, a masterpiece of lucid narrative and well-balanced judgment, guided by a sensitive taste and penetrated by that keen but good-natured irony, which is one of his finest endowments. In these latter years "The Twilight of the Gods" (1887, second edition, with additions, 1903) has also come to prove that the dramatic force, the passion and the humour, which marked respectively such pieces as the "Pope's Daughter," the "Eve of the Guillotine," and "Our Crocodile" have not been dead, but sleeping. In this book, however, though beneath the surface lie depths of serious thought and sentiment, touching the profoundest problems of humanity, it is humour that is uppermost. This humour is of a singular quality, the sport of a highly cultivated imagination, of a man who though a scholar is no pedant to allow his knowledge to congest, but ever keeps his literary soul alive by the circulation of his wit and fancy.

Among the more important of his other publications in prose may be enumerated "The Age of Dryden" (1895), "A Short History of Italian Literature" (1898), "Essays of an Ex-librarian" (1900), and, in conjunction with Mr. Edmund Gosse, a comprehensive history of English Literature, Mr. Garnett's share extending from the commencement to Shakespeare.

COSMO MONKHOUSE.

(Revised.)

POEMS.

RICHARD GARNETT,

I.—A NOCTURN.

K EEN winds of cloud and vaporous drift
Disrobe yon star, as ghosts that lift
A snowy curtain from its place,
To scan a pillow'd beauty's face.

They see her slumbering splendours lie
Bedded on blue unfathom'd sky.
And swoon for love and deep delight,
And stillness falls on all the night.

II.—FADING-LEAF AND FALLEN-LEAF.

S AID Fading-leaf to Fallen-leaf:—
“I toss alone on a forsaken tree,
It rocks and cracks with every gust that racks
Its straining bulk ; say, how is it with thee ?”

Said Fallen-leaf to Fading-leaf:—
“A heavy foot went by, an hour ago ;
Crushed into clay I stain the way ;
The loud wind calls me, and I cannot go.” 6*

Said Fading-leaf to Fallen-leaf:—

“Death lessons Life, a ghost is ever wise;
Teach me a way to live till May
Laughs fair with fragrant lips and loving eyes.”

Said Fallen-leaf to Fading-leaf:—

“Hast loved fair eyes and lips of gentle breath?
Fade then and fall—thou hast had all.
That Life can give, ask somewhat now of Death.”

III.—THE BALLAD OF THE BOAT.

THE stream was smooth as glass, we said: “Arise
and let’s away;”

The Siren sang beside the boat that in the rushes
lay,

And spread the sail, and strong the oar, we gaily
took our way.

When shall the sandy bar be cross’d? When shall
we find the bay?

The broadening flood swells slowly out o’er cattle-
dotted plains,

The stream is strong and turbulent, and dark with
heavy rains,

The labourer looks up to see our shallop speed
away.

When shall the sandy bar be cross’d? When shall
we find the bay?

Now are the clouds like fiery shrouds ; the sun,
superbly large,
Slow as an oak to woodman's stroke sinks flaming
at their marge.

The waves are bright with mirror'd light as jacinths
on our way.

When shall the sandy bar be cross'd ? When shall
we find the bay ?

The moon is high up in the sky, and now no more
we see

The spreading river's either bank, and surging
distantly

There booms a sullen thunder as of breakers far
away.

Now shall the sandy bar be cross'd, now shall we
find the bay !

The seagull shrieks high overhead, and dimly to our
sight

The moonlit crests of foaming waves gleam towering
through the night.

We'll steal upon the mermaid soon, and start her
from her lay,

When once the sandy bar is cross'd, and we are in
the bay.

What rises white and awful as a shroud-enfolded
ghost ?

What roar of rampant tumult bursts in clangour on
the coast ?

Pull back ! pull back ! The raging flood sweeps every
oar away.

O stream, is this thy bar of sand ? O boat, is this the
bay ?

IV.—THE VIOLET TO THE NIGHTINGALE.

NO longer fair, no longer sweet,
I parch and pine with noonday heat;
Another day, perhaps an hour,
And I shall be no more a flower.

Thou, happy bird, when flowers decay,
But spread'st thy pinions, and away,
And India's palmy groves, ere long,
Are loud with thy immortal song.

When with her soundless silver chain
The moon has fetter'd mount and plain,
And not a cloud her splendour mars,
For she has kissed them all to stars:

When lissom fawn, and antelope
In covert dell and cedar'd slope
Couch, or with bounding feet disturb
The dew asleep on every herb:

When thousand lines of light invest
The lotus trembling on the breast
Of the great stream that seeks the sea:
Then wilt thou sing, O, sing of me!

So shall the gorgeous flowers that swoon
All languid 'neath that lavish moon
Know, in thy sweet enchanted strain,
Their sister of the English lane.

How, lured by Spring's soft falling feet,
She stole forth from her deep retreat,
Her nurse wild March of boisterous breath,
April her spouse, and May her death.

All day she made her upward eye
The mirror of the azure sky,
All night she slept in glittering dew,
And dream'd her morning longings true.
Come back in Spring, then wilt thou see
Some other flower in room of me;
And as to me, to her wilt sing
Of thy long Eastern wandering.

V.—THE DIVER'S STORY.

TILL these grey mountains seem'd a wayside heap,
And all their pluming pines a petty moss,
I silently row'd onward, and did keep
A steady path the mighty main across;
But then I loosed my bark, and left her free
To dance her own glad measure with the sea;
And, plunging as a plummet plunges, stood
'Mid the sere purples of the barren wood
Whose sapless boughs, in sullen beauty drest,
Were never brighten'd by a spark of dew,
Or heard a song, or cherish'd any nest,
Or shook with any wind that ever blew.
Then as I wander'd on that oozeless sand,
Catching the sharp salt bubbles of the air,
I heard a silver song, and saw the rare
And tender form of soft Cymodoce
Pressing a rock, more innocently fair
Than feather shed by swan upon the sea,
Or moonlight sleeping fearless on the foam
Of hurrying falls. One marble-mocking hand
Upheld the golden thicket of the hair
Where one seem'd lost, as with an amber comb
It parted shell-born pearls from pearls of brine;

And, seablooms reddening all its deeps divine,
Low at her helpless feet her mirror lay ;
I seized the magic toy, and made it mine,
And like a shaft dismiss'd I sped away.

Here you may see the prize, is it not gay ?
Glowing with burnish of unspotted gold
Border'd with quaintest shells, and, day by day,
Changeful in splendour as the waters bold
Sway the rock-mantling weeds, or backward roll'd
Leave a salt glister on the glaring bay.

But when low, broad, and heavy in the west
Hangs the departing moon, and Autumn cold
Moans to her moaning waters, and the crest
Of every mounting wave is rimm'd with gold ;
There sounds a somewhat from the chiding seas,
As if they heaved around an ancient wrong,
And sad laments of spirits ill at ease
Murmur and mourn our boat-lined beach along ;
And some day I will take the mirror down,
And, rowing far from the steep-streeted town,
Will hold it forth, until a whiter hand
Rises to grasp it ; and Cymodoce,
Pleased with the late repentance of the land,
Hushes the doleful music of the sea.

VI.—THE SEA OF SOUL.

WRIT vast Creation o'er
By heavenly hand behold the precept true ;
Lock not the abounding store
With niggard heart and poor ;
Give, that it may be given unto you.

The rich sun not in vain
Feeds on his own great heart of living light;
The planets' shining train
By his their state sustain,
And by his fire's decrease the moon burns bright.

The black cloud tempest-spel,
Showering its silver on the barren sea,
Gives life unto the dead
When drops so wildly shed
Come back in happy rain to comfort flower and tree.

All energy and rest,
All interchange of shadow or of shine,
Are blended and are blest
In mutual interest.
Should not the lot of all things else be mine?

Sunlike my spirit burns,
Lavish of light for mortal need amassed;
It leaves me, nor returns,
No stars in golden urns
Gather the brightness that from me hath past.

For Penury and Pain
Medicine I know, and Sorrow I can cheer;
But Sympathy's sweet rain
Visiteth not again
The source it fled, and my own heart is sore.

Sore though the lip might chide,
One little kiss of Love had made it dumb.
I deemed we walked allied;
I called him to my side;
Gone was he not, for he had never come.

Tears streaming inwardly,
Thoughts misbegot and perishing alone,
Can like abortion be
By Nature's alchemy
Wrought to a solace for the souls unknown ?
Hath not Mind substance ? rare,
But true as those twin oceans Space reveals,
Bright water and soft air ?
Whereof, touched anywhere,
The whole mass thrills, and every atom feels.
Cast then, of man unheard,
Into that sea of soul thy secret sigh :
Billow by billow stirred
Swells with the tongueless word,
And the far deeps have knowledge and reply.
If such be Being's bent,
I, wronged in nought, no more will idly rue,
Nor more, my discontent
Soothing with sweet lament,
Linger beside my grief, as now I do.

VII.—EVEN-STAR.

FIRST-BORN and final relic of the night,
I dwell aloof in dim immensity ;
The grey sky sparkles with my fairy light ;
I mix among the dancers of the sea ;
Yet stoop not from the throne I must retain
High o'er the silver sources of the rain.
Vicissitude I know not, nor can know,
Yet much discern strewed everywhere around ;
The ever-stirring race of men below
Much do I watch, and wish I were not bound
The chainless captive of this lonely spot,
Where light-winged Mutability is not.

I see great cities rise, which being hoar
Are slowly rendered unto dust again;
And roaring billows preying on the shore;
And virgin isles ascending from the main;
The passing wave of the perpetual river;
And men depart, and man remaining ever.
The upturned eyes of many a mortal maid
Glass me in gathering tears, soon kissed away;
Then walks she for a space, and then is laid
Swelling the bosom of the quiet clay.
I muse what this all-kindling Love may be,
And what this Death that never comes to me.

VIII.—EPIGRAMS.

I

HITHER, dear Muse, I pray, and with thee bear
A madrigal for Melite the fair,
Evil with good repaying; for 'tis she
Who tempts me to oblivion of thee.

II

The Muse invoked, whom next shall I address,
To grant my strain both merit and success?
May Phœbus melody, may Pallas sense,
And Bacchus geniality dispense;
By Graces grace, passion by Venus be
Bestowed, the love of nature, Pan, by thee;
And last, without which all were not enough,
Vouchsafe, most potent Æolus, a puff.

III

Both thou and I alike, my Bacchic urn,
From clay are sprung, and must to clay return;
But happier fate this day is mine and thine,
For I am full of life, and thou of wine;
Our powers for mutual aid united be,
Keep thou me blithe, and flowing I'll keep thee.

IV

"I hardly ever ope my lips," one cries ;
 " Simonides, what think you of my rule ? "
 "If you're a fool, I think you're very wise ;
 If you are wise, I think you are a fool."

V

Amid all Triads let it be confest
 The Chase, the Feast, the Song compose the best,
 So aptly linked a mutual aid to lend
 To life's enjoyment, their concurrent end.
 The chase provides what doth to feasts belong ;
 The banquet prompts and animates the song ;
 The song, resounding with a twofold grace,
 Cheers the repast, and celebrates the chase.

VI

Philosopher, whom dost thou most affect,
 Stoics austere, or Epicurus' sect ?
 Friend, 'tis my grave infrangible design
 With those to study, and with these to dine.

IX.—THE SICILIAN OCTAVE DESCRIBED
 AND EXEMPLIFIED.

TO thee, fair Isle, Italia's satellite,
 Italian harps their native measures lend ;
 Yet, wooing sweet diversity, not quite
 Thy octaves with Italia's octave blend.
 Six streaming lines amass the arrowy might
 In hers, one cataract couplet doth expend .
 Thine lakewise widens, level in the light.
 And like to its beginning is its end.

SONNETS.

RICHARD GARNETT.

I.—AGE.

I WILL not rail or grieve when torpid eld
Frosts the slow-journeying blood, for I shall see
The lovelier leaves hang yellow on the tree,
The nimbler brooks in icy fetters held.
Methinks the aged eye that first beheld
Pale Autumn in her waning pageantry,
Then knew himself, dear Nature, child of thee,
Marking the common doom, that all compelled.
No kindred we to her belovèd broods,
If, dying these, we draw a selfish breath ;
But one path travel all their multitudes,
And none dispute the solemn Voice that saith :
Sun to thy setting ; to your autumn, woods ;
Stream to thy sea ; and man unto thy death.

II.—DANTE.

POET, whose unscarr'd feet have trodden Hell,
By what grim path and dread environing
Of fire couldst thou that dauntless footstep bring
And plant it firm amid the dolorous cell
Of darkness where perpetually dwell
The spirits cursed beyond imagining ?
Or else is thine a visionary wing,
And all thy terror but a tale to tell ?
Neither and both, thou seeker ! I have been
No wilder path than thou thyself dost go,
Close mask'd in an impenetrable screen,
Which having rent I gaze around, and know
What tragic wastes of gloom, before unseen,
Curtain the soul that strives and sins below.

III.—*JUSTICE.*

WHEN Deities from earth departure made,
Justice I found in attitude to soar :
No bandage veiled her eyes, no blade she bore,
Nor in her hand her wonted balance swayed.
Goddess, I cried with tongue and look dismayed,
Bereft of thee and thine, how any more
Shall Hope allure, or Gratitude adore,
Or Faith on Wisdom's prophecy be stayed ?
Fear not, she said, though far I seem to wend,
Who omnipresent am, and whose award
Hath course by automatic Law sublime.
My bandage blinds the vulgar ; on my sword
The malefactor falls ; my scales depend
In nicest balance from the hand of Time.

IV.—*THE SANDS OF TIME.*

CAMEST thou from the desert or the sea,
Slow-raining sand, whose lapse of gleaming brown,
Stealing the glassy horologe adown,
Arrayeth Time with visibility ?
Helpmate in either hath he had in thee,
Tombing the pride of temple or of town,
Or withering with salt waste the herbless down,
As willed the varying wind's inconstancy.
Thou, joyless load on earth for ever laid,
Yet plaything of all breezes as they pass,
Recordest here what thou depictest well :—
The thing like thee of streaming atoms made,
Singly a nothing, measureless in mass,
Mutation all, and yet unalterable !

IPHIGENIA IN DELPHI.

RICHARD GARNETT.

[Iphigenia, having aided her brother Orestes to carry off the statue of Artemis from Tauris, returns with him to Delphi, and prays that he may be purified from the murder of his mother Clytemnestra.]

O PHÆBUS, is it not an augury
Of good, that Fate hath led me to thy shrine
Whom most of all the Gods I should implore ?
For, when division anciently was made
Above, and each Immortal took his own,
'Twas given to thee to be our human kind's
Enlightener and healing comforter.
Thou showest thyself, and the benighted earth
Is splendid, and the drowsy hand resumes
The necessary task ; thou signallest,
And incense straight goes up to all the Gods.
Thou measurest the year, the earth is drest
By thee in all her seasonable garbs ;
Yea, even thy departing beam inflames
Innumerable lights, the moon walks forth
Clad in the pure redundance of thy ray.
By thee the herbage prospers, and the trees,
And herds, and flocks thyself hast shepherded,
Serving the throne Thessalian. In thy name
Men rear the citied homes of wealth and law,
And walls rise high with battlements and towers.
Moreover thou by wisest oracles
Dost make the future present, and hast found
Medicine, leniment of corporal pangs,
And Music, the assuager of the soul.
And, taught of thee, the sacred minstrels sing
Civility, and pious rites, and love,

And all that makes man loveable to man.
Needs must thou then hate all barbarity,
All jealousy and jarring dissonance,
All blood and vengeance, all the cloud of grief
That folds a kinsman for a kinsman slain.
And righteously then thou didst avert
Thy face erewhile in Argolis, and make
Thy radiant car invisible, and all
The earth a darkness, when my grandsire—O
The horror, and the fortune of our house !
O be it spent ! and may a younger race
Entreat thee for an unwithholden boon !
I plead not my own woes. I do not urge
The Aulian altar or the Scythian years,
Or even remind thee how thou promised'st
Orestes lustral purity, and peace
From madness, and proclaim that it befits
The God to keep the promise of the God.
But rather would I say with simple speech,
I have a brother, thou a sister, God !
Artemis, huntress virginal, whose car
Is glory of lone night, as thine of day.
If thou lov'st her as I Orestes (else
Thou God wert less than man, since well 'tis sung,
Divine and human needs must love alike,
The human being divine oppressed with bonds,
Divine the human in glad liberty),
Then, I adjure thee, aid him ! set him free
From spasm and panic, lead him to his throne
Ancestral, granting me to sit with him
Far through the lengthening years in quiet seats ;
And with us she who saved him, greatly took
The stain of half his fault, my sister dear
Electra, whom not having seen I love.

Lord de Tabley.

1835—1895.

LORD DE TABLEY, better known to readers and scholars in his earlier life by his *nom de plume* of William P. Lancaster, and later as the Hon. John Byrne Leicester Warren, was born on the 26th of April, 1835. He was educated at Eton, and at Christ Church, Oxford, where he graduated in 1856. He was called to the Bar in 1860, and in 1868 unsuccessfully contested the parliamentary seat of Mid-Cheshire in the Liberal interest. "Poems," 1859; "Ballads and Metrical Sketches," 1860; "The Threshold of Atrides," 1861; and "Glimpses of Antiquity," 1862; all published under the *nom de plume* "G. F.," or "George F. Preston," have been erroneously described as the joint work of Lord de Tabley and his friend George Fortescue. There is no foundation for this statement. Lord de Tabley was alone responsible for them. In the year 1863 he published two papers on "Numismatics," one "An Essay on Greek Federal Coinage," and the other a paper "On some Coins of Lycia under the Rhodian Domination, and of the Lycian League," communicated to the Numismatic Society of London. These were followed by "Praeterita," 1863; "Eclogues and Monodramas," 1864; "Studies in Verse," 1865; two metrical dramas, "Philoctetes," 1866, "Orestes," 1867; two novels, "A Screw Loose," 1868, "Ropes of Sand," 1869; two volumes of verse, "Rehearsals,"

1870, and "Searching the Net," 1873; a drama, "The Soldier of Fortune," 1876; and "A Guide to the Study of Book Plates," 1880. In 1893, after an interval of twenty years, he published "Poems Dramatic and Lyrical," and in 1895, "Poems Dramatic and Lyrical," Second Series.

"Philoctetes" has been ranked with the finest classical dramas of the century. The *Saturday Review* said, "In careful structure of plot, in classic chasteness of style and language, in nice and exact interweaving of part with part, in finish and completeness of the whole, 'Philoctetes' is worthy—and this is saying much—to be named in the same day with 'Atalanta in Calydon,' although the latter is entitled to a marked precedence"; and the *Spectator* spoke of it as beautiful in detail, and powerful as a whole; and as leaving the same sort of impression of sad majesty upon the reader as many of the finest Greek dramas themselves do, characterising it as "combining the self-restraint and subdued passion of the antique style, with here and there a touch of that luxuriance of conception, and everywhere that wider range of emotions and deep love of natural beauty characteristic of the modern." "Orestes," which followed in 1867, was received with high anticipation, and was read without disappointment. The poet's fine perception of the true spirit of the antique still showed itself, together with an even larger control of the means of its expression. "Orestes" is full of force and beauty in both dialogue and description, and the scene in which Orestes reproaches his mother, whom he believes to be guilty of seeking his life, rises to the level of adequate passion. The two volumes of shorter

poems, "Rehearsals" and "Searching the Net," contain work of such power and beauty that it is difficult to understand why they should have been allowed to remain so long out of print. The *Saturday Review*, in writing of "Rehearsals," after noticing its wide choice of styles, goes on to say, "the author has found his gift, and its presence is visible, more or less, in every piece on which he has tried his hand. This gift we take to be a compound of rich fancy and imagination, fostered by a keen and loving insight of nature, and kept in check by a sustained and observant study of the antique models, which better than any later examples, supply lessons of power and chasteness to modern verse writers." Of the classic poems in this volume "Pandora" is the most important. In "Searching the Net" the noble poem "Jael" given entire (pp. 210-218), is doubtless one of the finest, if not the very finest, of the collection. The "Poems Dramatic and Lyrical," 1893, include the best poems of the earlier volumes, together with others not previously published, the Second Series, 1895, contains only the poet's later verse. It cannot be denied that these two volumes present a fine body of independent poetic work. The earlier poetry of most poets shows the influence of the elder bards, or of the stronger of contemporary writers, and it is no detraction from the merit of Lord de Tabley's best work to say that some of his earlier efforts betray the influence of both Swinburne and Browning. But these volumes stand in need of no such apology. "Ambitious strength and an uncommon fertility of invention," says the *Speaker*, in reviewing the First Series of "Poems Dramatic

and Lyrical," "are the two impressions chiefly left us by Lord de Tabley's volume. The mere essaying of such themes as 'Phaëthon,' 'Jael,' 'Nimrod,' 'Pandora,' 'Zeus,' alone bespeaks a courage rare among our latter-day poets, who shrink more and more from themes smelling of the epic or drama—themes that demand toilsome conception or patient construction." And these poems are much more than mere essays or attempts; they are accomplishments—great themes adequately treated. Lord de Tabley's nature poems are equally felicitous and individual. "The Frosty Day," "The Study of a Spider," "Rural Evening," "A Winter Sketch," and "The Windmill," are remarkably graphic vignettes of rural life or scenery, while his Love lyrics express many moods, of which his "Nuptial Song" and "Retrospect" evidence the variety. With "Poems Dramatic and Lyrical" before us we could but hope and look for more work from the same pen. Nor was hope altogether disappointed, for "Orpheus in Thrace," a posthumous volume issued in 1901, adequately testifies to the unimpaired powers of his latest years. Weakened by successive attacks of influenza, Lord de Tabley died somewhat suddenly on Friday, the 22nd of November, 1895. The "collected poems" of Lord de Tabley were published in one volume by Chapman and Hall in 1903. It is a fine monument of poetic work.

ALFRED H. MILES.

SHORTER POEMS.

LORD DE TABLEY.

I.—THE PILGRIM CRANES.

THE pilgrim cranes are moving to their south,
The clouds are herded pale and rolling slow.
One flower is wither'd in the warm wind's mouth,
Whereby the gentle waters always flow.

The cloud-fire wanes beyond the lighted trees.
The sudden glory leaves the mountain dome.
Sleep into night, old anguish mine, and cease
To listen for a step that will not come.

II.—DAFFODILS.

I QUESTION with the amber daffodils,
Sheeting the floors of April, how she fares;
Where king-cup buds gleam out between the rills,
And celandine in wide gold beadlets glares.

By pastured brows and swelling hedge-row bowers,
From crumpled leaves the primrose bunches slip,
My hot face roll'd in their faint-scented flowers,
I dream her rich cheek rests beside my lip.

All weird sensations of the fervent prime
Are like great harmonies, whose touch can move
The glow of gracious impulse: thought and time
Renew my love with life, my life with love.

When this old world new-born puts glories on,
I cannot think she never will be won.

III.—A FROSTY DAY.

GRASS afield wears silver thatch,
Palings all are edged with rime.
Frost-flowers pattern round the latch.
Cloud nor breeze dissolve the clime;

When the waves are solid floor,
And the clods are iron-bound,
And the boughs are crystall'd hoar,
And the red leaf nail'd a-ground.

When the fieldfare's flight is slow,
And a rosy vapour rim,
Now the sun is small and low,
Belts along the region dim.

When the ice-crack flies and flaws,
Shore to shore, with thunder shock,
Deeper than the evening daws,
Clearer than the village clock.

When the rusty blackbird strips,
Bunch by bunch, the coral thorn,
And the pale day-crescent dips,
New to heaven a slender horn.

IV.—THE KNIGHT IN THE WOOD.

THE thing itself was rough and crudely done,
Cut in coarse stone, spitefully placed aside
As merest lumber, where the light was worst
On a back staircase. Overlooked it lay
In a great Roman palace crammed with art.
It had no number in the list of gems,
Weeded away long since, pushed out and banished,
Before insipid Guidos over-sweet,
And Dolce's rose sensationalities,
And curly chirping angels spruce as birds.
And yet the motive of this thing ill-hewn
And hardly seen *did* touch me. O, indeed,
The skill-less hand that carved it had belonged
To a most yearning and bewildered brain :
There was such desolation in the work ;
And through its utter failure the thing spoke
With more of human message, heart to heart,
Than all these faultless, smirking, skin-deep saints;
In artificial troubles picturesque,
And martyred sweetly, not one curl awry—
Listen ; a clumsy knight who rode alone
Upon a stumbling jade in a great wood
Belated. The poor beast with head low-bowed
Snuffing the treacherous ground. The rider leant
Forward to sound the marish with his lance.
You saw the place was deadly ; that doomed pair,
The wretched rider and the hide-bound steed,
Feared to advance, feared to return—That's all !

V.—MISREPRESENTATION.

PEACE, there is nothing more for men to speak;
A larger wisdom than our lips' decrees.
Of that dumb mouth no longer reason seek,
No censure reaches that eternal peace,
And that immortal ease.

Believe them not that would disturb the end
With earth's invidious comment, idly meant.
Speak and have done thine evil; for my friend
Is gone beyond all human discontent,
And wisely went.

Say what you will and have your sneer and go.
You see the specks, we only heed the fruit
Of a great life, whose truth—men hate truth so—
No lukewarm age of compromise could suit.
Laugh and be mute!

VI.—NUPTIAL SONG.

"SIGH, HEART, BREAK NOT."

SIGH, heart, and break not; rest, lark, and wake not!
Day I hear coming to draw my Love away.
As mere-waves whisper, and clouds grow crisper,
Ah, like a rose he will waken up with day.

In moon-light lonely, he is my Love only,
I share with none when Luna rides in gray.
As dawn-beams quicken, my rivals thicken,
The light and deed and turmoil of the day.

To watch my sleeper to me is sweeter,
Than any waking words my Love can say;
In dream he finds me and closer winds me!
Let him rest by me a little more and stay.

Ah, mine eyes, close not: and, tho' he knows not,
My lips, on his be tender while you may;
Ere leaves are shaken, and ring-doves waken,
And infant buds begin to scent new day.

Fair Darkness, measure thine hours, as treasure
Shed each one slowly from thine urn, I pray;
Hoard in and cover each from my lover;
I cannot lose him yet; dear night, delay.

Each moment dearer, true-love lie nearer,
My hair shall blind thee lest thou see the ray;
My locks encumber thine ears in slumber
Lest any bird dare give thee note of day.

He rests so calmly; we lie so warmly;
Hand within hand, as children after play;—
In shafted amber on roof and chamber
Dawn enters; my Love awakens; here is day.

VII.—RETROSPECT.

IF we have pondered on a face,
In yonder age of simple days,
If burning lips of first embrace
Sealed us as pilgrims in love's ways:

The silly chains became us well,
When rosy lay the orchard roods,
And April buds began to swell,
And starlings thought about their broods.

The easy fetters bound us sweet;
The shrill lark dwindled overhead.
The land lay incense at our feet.
We did not dream upon the dead!

With ardent cheek and earnest breath
We plighted unenduring vows ;
And bound, instead of amaranth wreath,
Deciduous roses round our brows.

Bud after bud descends to dust ;
Those rare years sigh and go their way.
We leave our garlands, since we must,
When heads begin to gather gray.

Then farewell, Love, for other skies,
We laud thee now we need the least.
We will not be as guests, who rise,
And, risen, chide against the feast.

Untainted we will always save
The sweet of thy memorial joy ;
Let fools thy royal table leave
And soil the banquet with alloy.

Go, harpy, with thy loathsome wing,
Go, cynic, with thy touch of mire !
We hold it an ignoble thing
To laugh against our old desire ;

Ye seem to scorn Love's richer hour,
In envy half, but more in craft,
And wholly sullen : since your flower
Is withered on its autumn shaft.

We least will ape this dotard's part,
Who sneers at love in aspen tone,
Who jests on his once wholesome heart,
And cheapens all who still have one.

He hardens in his selfish crust ;
His blear eyes only understand
Three things as comely—wine, and lust,
And greed which guides the palsied hand.
Irreverent, isolated thing !
Old scare-crow on the field of vice,
Some rags of youth around thee cling
To flutter in a land of ice !
Leave in his shrine, veiled round and sad,
The Amor of thy tender days.
Thank Heaven that once thou couldst be glad,
Be silent, if thou canst not praise.
Ah, crush not in with tainted feet :
Is thy thought cankered, keep away.
Tho' idols snap, and fair things fleet,
Leave one spot pure wherein to pray.
Some day indeed, before thy last,
When all life's boughs are bare of fruit,
When mock and sneer are overpast,
And every shallow laugh is mute,
Come to this haven, and unveil
The imaged face thy youth held best ;
Kneel down before it, have thy wail,
And crawl the better to thy rest.

VIII.—THE STUDY OF A SPIDER.

FROM holy flower to holy flower
Thou weavest thine unhallowed bower
The harmless dewdrops, beaded thin,
Ripple along thy ropes of sin.
Thy house a grave, a gulf thy throne
Affright the fairies every one.

Thy winding sheets are gray and fell,
Imprisoning with nets of hell
The lovely births that winnow by,
Winged sisters of the rainbow sky :
Elf-darlings, fluffy, bee-bright things,
And owl-white moths with mealy wings,
And tiny flies, as gauzy thin
As e'er were shut electrum in.
These are thy death spoils, insect ghoul,
With their dear life thy fangs are foul.
Thou felon anchorite of pain,
Who sittest in a world of slain.
Hermit, who tunest song unsweet
To heaving wing and writhing feet.
A glutton of creation's sighs,
Miser of many miseries.
Toper, whose lonely feasting chair
Sways in inhospitable air.
The board is bare, the bloated host
Drinks to himself toast after toast.
His lip requires no goblet brink
But like a weasel must he drink,
The vintage is as old as time
And bright as sunset, pressed and prime.
Ah, venom mouth and shaggy thighs,
And paunch grown sleek with sacrifice,
Thy dolphin back and shoulders round
Coarse-hairy, as some goblin hound,
Whom a hag rides to sabbath on,
While shuddering stars in fear grow wan.
Thou palace priest of treachery,
Thou type of selfish lechery,
I break the toils around thy head
And from their gibbets take thy dead.

IX.—A WINTER SKETCH.

WHEN the snow begins to feather,
And the woods begin to roar,
Clashing angry boughs together,
As the breakers grind the shore.
Nature then a bankrupt goes,
Full of wreck and full of woes.

When the swan for warmer forelands
Leaves the sea-firth's icebound edge :
When the gray geese from the moorlands
Cleave the cloud in noisy wedge.
Woodlands stand in frozen chains,
Hung with ropes of solid rains.

Shepherds creep to byre and haven,
Sheep in drifts are nipped and numb :
Some belated rook or raven
Rocks upon a sign-post dumb.
Mere-waves solid as a clod
Roar with skaters thunder-shod.

All the roofs and chimneys rumble,
Roads are ridged with slush and sleet ;
Down the orchard apples tumble,
Ploughboys stamp their frosty feet.
Millers, jolted down the lanes,
Hardly feel for cold their reins.

Snipes are calling from the trenches,
Frozen half and half at flow,
In the porches servant wenches
Work with shovels at the snow.
Rusty blackbirds, weak of wing,
Clean forget they once could sing.

Dogs and boys fetch down the cattle,
Deep in mire and powdered pale :
Spinning wheels commence to rattle,
Landlords spice the smoking ale.
Hail, white winter, lady fine,
In a cup of elder wine.

X.—THE WINDMILL.

DESOLATE windmill, eyelid of the distance,
Gaunt as a gibbet, ruled against the sky :
Rolling and rocking in the wind's persistence,
Thy black uplifted dome-house seems to fly :
Writhing its wings, as eagle Promethean,
Who tears the Titan on Caucasian height.
While all the gentle gods above sing pæan,
To see Jove's red-winged vengeance rend and smite.
Emblem of Life, whose roots are torn asunder,
An isolated soul that hates its kind,
Who loves the region of the rolling thunder,
And finds seclusion in the misty wind.
Type of a love, that wrecks itself to pieces
Against the barriers of relentless Fate,
And tears its lovely pinions on the breezes
Of just too early or of just too late.
The desolation of a moorland wasted,
An endless heath, half-tinged with reddening ling :
Gray bitter tracts which ploughshare never tasted,
Too sour to waken at the voice of spring.
These wiry roots revive not when the zephyrs
Unclasp the budded fragrance on the thorn.
Not here shall come the sound of lowing heifers,
Not here shall heave the rippling waves of corn.

In thee, old mill, I see Ixion quiver,
Chained on a wheel in Acherusian deep,
Upon whose weary eyelids not for ever
Descends the healing balm of angel sleep.

I see some dragon-fly with wings outshadow
The current-dancing midge, whose murmur fails
Beneath the swooping tyrant of the meadow,
Bat-like and spectral, with loud latticed sails,

At eve thou loomest like a one-eyed giant
To some poor crazy knight who pricks along,
And sees thee wave in haze thy arms defiant,
And growl the burden of thy grinding song.

Against thy russet sail-sheet slowly turning,
The raven beats belated in the blast :
Behind thee ghastly, blood-red Eve is burning,
Above, rose-feathered drifts are racking fast.

The curlews pipe around their plaintive dirges,
Thou art a Pharos to the sea-mews hoar,
Set sheer above the tumult of the surges,
As sea-mark on some spacious ocean floor.

My heart is sick with gazing on thy feature,
Old blackened sugar-loaf with four-fold wings,
Thou seemest as some monstrous insect creature,
Some mighty chafer armed with iron stings.

Emblem of man, who, after all his moaning,
And strain of dire immeasurable strife,
Has yet this consolation, all atoning,—
Life, as a windmill, grinds the bread of Life.

DAPHNE.

LORD DE TABLEY.

THE floating Moon went down the tract of night ;
The rosiness of sunset yellowed down
Into a lighted argent at the roots
Of the soft clouds that bore her. All day long
In devious forest, grove, and fountain side
The God had sought his Daphne. The sweet light
Had left him in his searching, but desire
Immortal held all slumber from his brain,
And drave him like a restless dream among
The pale and sylvan valleys. Here each branch
Swayed with a glitter all its crowded leaves,
And brushed the soft divine hair touching them
In ruffled clusters, as Apollo strode
Among the foliage.

Suddenly the moon
Smoothed herself out of vapour-drift, and made
The deep night full of pleasure in the eye
Of her sweet motion. Not alone she came
Leading the starlight with her like a song ;
And not a bud of all that undergrowth
But crisped, and tingled out an ardent edge
As the light steeped it ; over whose massed leaves
The portals of illimitable sleep
Faded in heaven. The chambers of the dawn
Lay lordless yet, and, till the prime beam, gray.

As some cloud-vapour caught among the pines,
Alone in dim white shadow Phœbus went
To seek her : only on his lip and brows
Descended glory ; otherwise the God,
His noble limbs marbled in moonlight, came,
While on the crag-face infinite blue pines
Crowded the vales, and, seeming in the mist
Themselves as vapour, faded tier on tier.
And as he wandered from the lips divine
Came this complaining of the love-lorn god :—

“Beautiful Daphne, eagle-bird of the hills ;
O lovely Daphne, sleek and slender fawn ;
The wild bee hides her store among the rocks,
Thou hidest up thy beauty in these hills ;
Why in the wasting of the mountain side
Dost thou delight, my darling, still to cower
Behind gray boulders ? As the slender fern
Draws in its feathery tresses underneath
Some fountain slab, and trembles half the day
At each vale whisper. O my little neat
And twinkling mountain lizard, rustling in
Between the shadows, nestling a bright side ;
A moment shining out into the light,
Gone like a flash. My silent dove of the woods,
Thou fearest lest thy song reveal thy nest.
Thou tremblest as a dew-drop at my tread.
Is my glance deadly, and my love unkind ?
That thou wilt never set thy fugitive cheek
Against my lips an instant, till my breath
Revive thee ; till thy timid eyes look up
And smile unwilling love to my desire.
There is not any fear in loving ways ;
Be comforted, thou restless little one.
Let me approach thee, and thy life shall find

Its music ; and a sudden land of flowers
Shall lift itself around thee, fleecy-deep,
And veiling heaven out in exuberant
Curtains of bloom."

"Divine one, thy child days
Are gone, their pretty echoes broken all ;
More is the music of the hours that grow,
Clothed with sweet sound and mellow chords of fire ;
The lyric words are older than the gods,
Coeval with the fruitful patient earth,
Mother of many children. O my nymph,
I dwelt alone in glory, crowned with light ;
For thee I have forgot my radiant throne.
The cloudy plains are weary to my feet,
The nectar cup is bitter to my mouth ;
A god, I languish, broken with desire,
A king, I pine, bound of a mightier one.
Veiling my golden brows in earthy gloom,
Here, as a mist, I wander all night long,
Until the dawning with a gush of fire
Make blow the little winds and shake the meres."

A HYMN TO APHRODITE.

LORD DE TABLEY.

URANIAN Aphrodite, fair
From ripples of the ocean spray :
Sweet as the sea-blooms in thy hair,
Rosed with the blush of early day,
O hear us from thy temple steep,
Where Eryx crowns the Dorian deep.

Unfold the rapture of thy face,
No more thy lustrous eyes conceal :
But from the rivers of thy grace
The rich abundant joys reveal.
Give us the treasures of thy rest,
Take us as children to thy breast.

Desired of all the ages long,
As Morning young, as old as Fate,
The kneeling world with choral song
Has crowded round thy altar gate.
Thine are the seasons past and dumb,
And thine the unborn years to come.

We are not worthy to endure
The fervour of thy burning eyes,
Thy perfect lips, thy bosom pure,
Thy radiant aspect, sweetly wise.
Breathe balm upon our span of breath,
For thou art almost queen of death.

To thee, enwreathed with passion flowers,
Our unreluctant prayers are given :
Thou art so near, when other powers
Seem worlds away in frigid heaven :
They know not, for they live apart,
The craving tumult of the heart.

Thy altar needs no victim slain :
It reeks not with the bleeding steer ;
Thy kingdom is no realm of pain,
Thy worship is no creature's fear.
Yet art thou trebly more divine,
Needing no hecatombs of kine.

The empires wane, the empires grow :
They prosper or they are dismayed :
Time lays their wrangling voices low,
The victors and the vanquished fade.
The foam-wreath on the crested spray
Lasts but an instant less than they.

But thou abidest, in thy might
Eternal, and a rainbow beam
Is round thy head : and clusters bright
Of orbs among thy tresses gleam :
Clothed in the garment of the sun,
Sweet as the star of day begun.

Parent of Nature, lovely queen,
Awake the frozen land's repose,
Until the perfumed buds are seen
With promise of the myriad rose.
Descend, and on thy halcyon wing
Unlock the fountains of the spring.

THE CHURCHYARD ON THE SANDS.

LORD DE TABLEY.

MY Love lies in the gates of foam,
The last dear wreck of shore ;
The naked sea-marsh binds her home,
The sand her chamber door.

The grey gull flaps the written stones,
The ox-birds chase the tide ;
And near that narrow field of bones
Great ships at anchor ride.

Black piers with crust of dripping green,
One foreland, like a hand,
O'er intervals of grass between
Dim lonely dunes of sand.

A church of silent weathered looks,
A breezy reddish tower,
A yard whose mounded resting-nooks
Are tinged with sorrel flower.

In peace the swallow's eggs are laid
Along the belfry walls ;
The tempest does not reach her shade,
The rain her silent halls.

But sails are sweet in summer sky,
The lark throws down a lay ;
The long salt levels steam and dry
The cloud-heart melts away.

But patches of the sea-pink shine,
The pied crows poise and come ;
The mallow hangs, the bind-weeds twine,
Where her sweet lips are dumb.

The passion of the wave is mute ;
No sound or ocean shock ;
No music save the trilling flute
That marks the curlew flock.

But yonder when the wind is keen,
And rainy air is clear,
The merchant city's spires are seen,
The toil of men grows near.

Along the coast-way grind the wheels
Of endless carts of coal ;
And on the sides of giant keels
The shipyard hammers roll.

The world creeps here upon the shout,
And stirs my heart in pain ;
The mist descends and blots it out,
And I am strong again.

Strong and alone, my dove, with thee ;
And tho' mine eyes be wet,
There's nothing in the world to me
So dear as my regret.

I would not change my sorrow sweet
For others' nuptial hours ;
I love the daisies at thy feet
More than their orange flowers.

My hand alone shall tend thy tomb
From leaf-bud to leaf-fall,
And wreathe around each season's bloom
Till autumn ruins all.

Let snowdrops early in the year
Droop o'er her silent breast;
And bid the later cowslip rear
The amber of its crest.

Come hither, linnets tufted-red ;
Drift by, O wailing tern ;
Set pure vale lilies at her head,
At her feet lady-fern.

Grow, samphire, at the tidal brink,
Wave pansies of the shore,
To whisper how alone I think
Of her for evermore.

Bring blue sea-hollies thorny, keen,
Long lavender in flower ;
Grey wormwood like a hoary queen,
Stanch mullein like a tower.

O sea-wall, mounded long and low,
Let iron bounds be thine ;
Nor let the salt wave overflow
That breast I held divine.

Nor float its sea-weed to her hair,
Nor dim her eyes with sands ;
No fluted cockle burrow where
Sleep folds her patient hands.

Tho' thy crest feel the wild sea's breath,
Tho' tide-weight tear thy root,
Oh, guard the treasure-house, where death
Has bound my Darling mute.

Tho' cold her pale lips to reward
With love's own mysteries,
Ah, rob no daisy from her sward,
Rough gale of eastern seas !

Ah, render sere no silken bent
That by her head-stone waves ;
Let noon and golden summer blent
Pervade these ocean graves.

And, ah, dear heart, in thy still nest,
Resign this earth of woes,
Forget the ardours of the west,
Neglect the morning glows.

Sleep and forget all things but one,
Heard in each wave of sea,—
How lonely all the years will run
Until I rest by thee.

AN ODE.

LORD DE TABLEY.

SIRE of the rising day,
Lord of the faded ray,
King of sweet ways of morn or daylight done.
Ruler of cloud and sleep,
Whose tread is on the deep,
Whose feet are red in glory like the sun.
Whose hand binds up the winds as in a sheaf,
Whose shadow makes them tremble like a leaf.

Lordship and Fear are thine,
Upon whose brow divine
The diadem of pale eternal fire
Burns over eyes that fear
No stain of earthly tear,
Nor soften for a yearning world's desire.
The treasure of strong thunder at thy hand
Waits like an eagle watching thy command.

Thee rosy beams enshroud ;
Rich airs and amber cloud
Reach the calm golden spaces of thy hall.
The floods awake with noise
Churning the deep, whose voice,
Thou heedest not ; altho' the storm-wind call,
And break beneath the swollen vapour-bands,
In wild rains wearing at the sodden lands.

Can then our weak-winged prayer
Ascend and touch thee there,
Sailing between the gleaming gates of heaven ?
Can our wail climb and smite
Thy council-seat of light ?
Where for a garment is the moon-ray given
To clothe thy shoulders, and blue star-dust strown
Bickers about the borders of thy throne.

Ah, Lord, who may withstand
One reaching of thy hand,
Who from thy fury fence his house secure ?
What citadel is there,
In lifted hand or prayer,
If all the radiant heaven may not endure
The scathing of thine anger, keen to blight
The strong stars rolling in their fields of light ?

Arise and take thine ease,
For thou art Lord ; and these
Are but as sprinkled dust before thy power.
Art thou the less divine,
If they lift hands and whine,
Or less eternal since they crawl an hour ?
After a little pain to fold their hands,
And perish like the beasts that tilled their lands.

They dug their field and died,
Believed thee or denied ;
Cursed at thy name, or fed thy shrine with fume.
Loved somewhat, hated more,
Hoarded, grew stiff and sore,
Gat sturdy sons to labour in their room ;
Became as alien faces in their land ;
Died, worn and done with as a waste of sand.

Strong are alone the dead.
They need not bow the head,
Or reach one hand in ineffectual prayer.
Safe in their iron sleep
What wrong shall make them weep,
What sting of human anguish reach them there ?
They are gone safe beyond the strong one's reign,
Who shall decree against them any pain ?

Will they entreat in tears
The inexorable years
To sprinkle trouble gently on their head ?
Safe in their house of grass,
Eternity may pass,
And be to these an instant in its tread,
Calm as an autumn night, brief as the song
Of the wood dove. The dead alone are strong.

Love is not there or Hate,
Weak slaves of feebler fate,
Their lord is nothing here, his reign is done.
Here side by side can lie
Glory and Infamy,
Hero and herdsman in red earth are one.
Their day is over : sad they silence keep,
Abashed before the perfect crowning sleep.

JAEL.

LORD DE TABLEY.

SO then their hymn of victory is done.
Thank God for that. Home are the soldiers gone.
The garlands of the triumph wither brown,
The singing-girls are sleepy, the hoarse crowd
Murmurs itself away. Night rises fast.
The shadows on the canvas of my tent
Deepen, and Jael in her lonely home
Begins to think it over, now the blare
Of clarions do not hail her longer blest.
O lying voice! Methought, I found a crown
Of glory, silvern : out I held my hand
And drew a burnished adder off her nest,
Who stung me redly first, and, when blood dried,
In one small pit of poison deadly-blue.
The name of that ill worm is Infamy.
So the moon comes and silence in her train ;
There will not be a many stars to-night.
The wind begins his circuit with a wail.
He tastes and touches at each little peak,
And in the broken furrows like a bird
Sings out in darkness. Why art thou so sad ?
" O blessed among women "—So they sang
With brazen lips to God. But he knows more
And with one great chain binds my heavy soul ;
I do not think that God will ever reach
His finger down and ease it. He hates me ;
You see, I cannot weep. Does that sound well ?
How many evil women can find tears,
Sinning all day. My one great deed of blood
Outweighs, as Horeb, in the scales of God

Against some petty sand-grains. He sees that,
Insists upon it, keeps it in his books
In plain red flaring letters that endure.
These women have a hundred petty ways
Of sinning feebly. He forgets them all.
They sin as ants or flies. He cannot praise
Or blame such creatures, simply lets them be.
I feel all this alone with my own heart.
The solitude is busy with God's voice
Speaking my sin. I am worn and wearied out ;
A mere weak woman, after all is said ;
Searching the intense dark with sleepless eyes,
Huddled away by the main-pole in the midst,
A curled crushed thing, a blurred white heap of robes.
Moaning at times with wild arms reaching out.
While on my canvas walls the rain-gush comes,
And the ropes scream and tighten in the blast.

So I must watch until my lord return ;
The camp of Israel holds to-night carouse,
And Heber sits at Barak's own right hand ;
Because I have risen against a sleeping man,
And slain him, like a woman. No man slays
After this sort. The craven deed is mine,
Hold thou its honour, Heber ; have thy wine,
Among the captains claim the noblest seat ;
And revel, if thou hast the heart, till dawn,
Brave at the board and feeble in the field !

As the sun fell this eve I felt afraid,
For in his fading, as he touched the haze,
I saw in heaven one round ripe blot of blood.
And all the gates of light, whereby he died,
Were wasted to one drop, a crimson seed ;
I turned away and made mine eyelids fast ;

But deep down in my soul I saw it still
The single reddish clot. The blood was pale;
They say pale blood is deadlier than the red,
And pallid this one drop. I think it came
Out of his forehead underneath the nail.
I had been told that slain men bled so much,
I nerved my soul for rivers and none flowed.
Somehow, his bloodless death was awfulest.
There seemed no reason, why at one swift blow
Of my deft hands this warm flushed sleepy man
Should cease into a statue, as he did,
At one shock of the hammer on his brow.
(I heard a fable once,—a trader's tale,
Who sailed from Javan's islands hawking veils—
How with a mallet one struck stone to flesh;
He was a cunning carver, if he did;
But I smote flesh to marble. That's no skill,
Requires a devil only.) He turned once—
Twice—with a sort of little heaving moan,
A strange sad kind of choking under-sound;
And opened at me full great piteous eyes,
Already glazing with reproachful films;—
As with one gasp—I fancy he gasped twice—
He lay there done with, that great goodly man;
And in his sidelong temple, where bright curls
Made crisp and glorious margin to his brows—
So that a queen might lay her mouth at them
Nor rise again less royal for their kiss—
There, in the interspace of beard and brow,
The nail had gone tearing the silken skin;
And, driven home to the jagged head of it,
Bit down into the tent-boards underneath;
And riveted that face of deadly sleep;
As some clown nails an eagle on his barn,

The noble bird slain by the ignoble hand,
So slept the lordly captain at my feet ;
His lovely eyes were hardly troubled now ;
Yet in his keen grey lips a certain scorn
Dwelt as indignant, that a deed so mean,
Treason so petty, woman-guile so poor,
Should ever stifle out their glorious breath.
As I leant o'er them their serene disdain
Was eloquent against me, more than words,
And easy was the meaning of their scorn
To render and interpret into this—
“Better to be as we are earth and dust
Than to endure, as Jael shall live on,
In self-contempt more bitter than the grave.
Live on and pine in long remorseful years.
Terrible tears are sequel to this deed ;
Beat on thy breast, have ashes in thy hair,
Still shalt thou bear about in all thy dreams
One image, one reproach, one face, one fear.
Live, Jael, live. We shall be well revenged.”

This woman was a mother, think of that ;
A name which carries mercy in its sound,
A pitiful meek title one can trust ;
She gave her babe the breast like other wives,
In cradle laid it, had her mother heed
To give it suck and sleep. You would suppose
She might learn pity in its helpless face ;
A man asleep is weaker than a child,
And towards the weak God turns a woman's heart
Hers being none. She is ambitious, hard,
Vain, would become heroic ; to nurse babes
And sit at home, why, any common girl
Is good enough for that. She must have fame,
She shall be made a song of in the camp,

And have her name upon the soldier's lip
Familiar as an oath. And when she dies
She must write Jael on the years to come ;
Oblivion only terrifies her heart,
And infamy is almost twin to fame ;
But rusting unremembered in the grave
Is worst of all. Let Jael rest secure,
That, if the reprobation of all time
Fall sweetly on her ashes, hers shall be
Perpetual condemnation. Ah, vain heart,
Thou shalt not lie forgotten till the stars
Fall black into the pathways of the brine.

Can time efface a deed so wholly vile ?
She stood, the mother-snake, before her tent,
She feigned a piteous dew in her false eyes,
She made her low voice gentle as a bird's,
Her one hand beckoned to the fugitive,
Her other felt along the poniard's edge
Hid near the breast where late her baby fed.
She drew the noble weary captain in ;
Her guest beneath the shelter of her home,
He laid him down to rest and had no fear.
The sacred old alliance with her clan,
The trustful calm immunity of sleep,
Sealing security each more secure.
Ah, surely, he was safe if anywhere
Beneath the mantle which she laid on him.
He was too noble to mistrust her much ;
His fading sense felt her insidious arm
Folding him warmly. Then he slept—she rose,
Slid like a snake across the tent—struck twice—
And stung him dead.

God saw her up in Heaven.

The lark outside went on with his old song.
The sheep grazed, and the floating clouds came past—
Yet it was done. Sleep, guest-right, given word,
All broken, each forgotten. She had lied
Against these holiest three and slain him there.
Bonds were as straw ; if once she thought of them,
They only gave new keenness to the nail,
And made her right hand surer for the blow.
Pah ! she will come to slay her children next
For glory and a little puff of fame ;
And so they crowned her, but her myrtle roots
In strange red soil were nurtured, and their leaves
Are never wet with rain, but fed on tears.

Then Israel came with many cymbal-girls
And clashed this noble triumph into odes,
Great pæans full of noise and shaken spears,
Loud horns and blare of battle, dust, and blood.
Then shrilled that old lean shrewing prophetess,
Grey as a she-wolf on some weaned lamb's track,
Her song of death and insult on the slain ;
Then Israel's captain holding by her skirt,
Sang second to her raving with loud words
And hare-like eyes that looked on either side,
As if in dread dead Sisera should rise
And drive him howling up the vale in fear
With nimble heels. This captain who declared
To this old scolding woman Deborah,
" Except thou goest with me I remain.
I dare not face great Sisera alone,
Unless some female fury hound me on."
The brave words of a captain brave as they,
A leader chiefly bold against the slain,
Fit jackal to the tigress which I seem,

Worthy to share the triumph of her deed,
That makes her almost viler than himself,
The craven hound tied to an old wife's strings.

My marvel is by what insidious steps
The will to slay him ripened in my mood.
For on that morning I had risen at peace,
And all my soul was calmer than a pool
Folded in vapour when the winds are gone.
Wholly at peace, I watched the ray new-born
In blessed streaks and rapid amber lanes
Run out among our vale-heads : low in heaven
One great star floated, rolling yellow light.
For all night long my baby would not rest,
Till the dawn drifted, at whose coming sleep
Drew down his eyelids to my slumber song.
He could doze cradled now beyond my arms ;
And, as the day was instant everywhere,
I came and held my station at the door
To draw the glory in and make it mine.
When suddenly a kind of weary mood
At all my mother life and household days
Clouded my soul and tainted her delight.
It seemed such petty work, such wretched toil,
To tend a child and serve a husband's whims ;
Meek, if my lord return with sullen eyes,
Glad, if his heart rejoice ; to watch his ways,
Live in his eye, hoard his least careless smile ;
Chatter with other wives, manage and hoard,
Quarrel and make it up—and then the grave,
Like fifty thousand other nameless girls,
Who took their little scrap of love and sun
Contentedly and died. Was I as these ?
My dream was glory and their aim delight ;

Should I be herded with their nameless dust ?
Achievement seemed so easy to my hand
In that great morning. All my heart ran fire,
And turning I beheld my cradled child,
And caught the coming footstep of my lord
Crisp in the grass. My waking life resumed
Its fetter as he came. Content thee, drudge,
Here is thy lot ; fool not thy heart on dreams.
Then with a little weary sigh I rose
To welcome him ; and hastily put by
The vision of the morning. As a girl
Draping herself in secret with fine webs,
Starts at a sudden step and flings them down.
Restless he entered, gloomy, ill at ease,
Then shook himself and laughed his humour off
With an ill grace, relapsing to a frown.
And pushed about the tent arranging robes,
Searching old chests long undisturbed in dust ;
Then glancing at the wonder in my face,
Carelessly glancing, roughly he began,—
“You help me none, but marvel with big eyes
At one in household lumber elbow-deep ;
Hiding is better than the surest key.
A fight there will be ; ay, a game of blows,
Arrows and wounded men and broken wheels,
Nor further than a rook flies out to feed
From this tent-door. An hour remains to hide
The ore of our possessions, let the dross
Remain and sate the spearman if he comes.”
“A battle,” my lips faltered ; all my soul
Flushed out into my face on hearing it.
Was my dream come at last ? He made reply,
Misreading my emotion, “Do not fear ;
We will stand by and let them fight it out.

We have some friends at court in either camp ;
Neither will harm us, let the strong prevail.
We can await the issue and declare
For him who wins !” He laughed, and I was dumb
With bitter scorn against him in my soul,
Loathing my husband. But I tried him more—
“ O lord,” I said, “ let me arise and arm thee.
The cause of Israel is the holy one.
These heathen are as dust upon the earth.
Let us strike in for Israel, tho’ we die !”
“ Ay, dame,” he muttered, “ he is right who wins,
And Israel may be right for all I care ;
Yet Sisera is strong, and wise ones hide,
When arrow sings to arrow in the air.
If right is weak, why then the God of right
Ought to be strong enough to help his own,
Without molesting one more quiet man.
But, while we chatter on, the morning ebbs,
I shall sweep off our treasure to the hills.
You and the babe may follow, as you please.
Safe is the upland, perilous the plain ;
How say you ?” But in scorn I turned away,
And cried, “ Begone, O feeble heart.” He went
Laughing and left me.

Then the battle shocks
Deepened all morning in the vales, and died
And freshened ; but at even I beheld
A goodly man and footsore, whom I knew ;
And then my dream rushed on my soul once more ;
Saying, this man is weary, lure him in,
And slay him ; and behold eternal fame
Shall blare thy name up to the stars of God.
I called him and he came. The rest is blood,
And doom and desolation till I die !

Thomas Ashe.

1836—1889.

THOMAS ASHE was born in 1836 at Stockport, Cheshire,—

“ on a Midsummer night,
When fairies keep their revels, and delight
To vex poor men with many a wicked thing;
Who left me, half I think, a changeling.”

His father, who was a clergyman, was also an enthusiastic amateur artist. Young Ashe went up from the Grammar School of his native town to St. John's, Cambridge, and graduated with mathematical honours. He was ordained and became a schoolmaster, publishing his first volume, “Poems” (some written as early as 1855), while at Peterborough, in 1859, and following it up by “Dryope, and other Poems” in 1861. At this time he was for a while curate of Silverstone, in Northamptonshire, but he soon resigned his connection with the Church, to resume teaching. He wrote in after years, in a private letter: “‘Rev.’ need not be rooted up that I see. Still, it is so.” In “Pictures, and other Poems” (1864), written, one supposes, on the shores

of Lake Lemman, Ashe told anew in his own delicate and minute fashion that story of Psyche with which Apuleius appealed so strongly to the modern imagination. In 1866 appeared a drama, "The Sorrows of Hypsipyle," followed in 1873 by the story of "Edith" (written, however, four years earlier), told in a metre which is an attempt to reproduce the classic hexameter. "Songs Now and Then" (1875) contains the finest and most mature work of this writer.

In 1865 Mr. Ashe had become mathematical and modern form master at Leamington College, and in 1867 at Queen Elizabeth's School, Ipswich, remaining there nine years. After a residence of some time in Paris, which left an impress on his latest work, Ashe wrote (about 1879) "Bettws-y-Coed," and more songs. These later poems were issued at intervals, privately. In 1881 he settled in London, and in 1886 published in one volume a complete and definitive edition of his "Poems." At about the same time he was occupied in the preparation of an edition of Coleridge's works,—the poems in two volumes for the Aldine Series, and three volumes of Miscellanies, Table-talk and Lectures. In 1888 he printed privately at the Chiswick Press a new volume of poems and translations, mostly very short, entitled "Songs of a Year." In some of these songs there was a new note of almost socialistic sympathy with the poor and suffering. Ashe led a lonely and, one gathers, a somewhat sad life, not untouched by poverty and illness. At no time popular, his works were once received with applause by the accredited critics; latterly it was not so; he felt this indifference, but accepted it with resignation. A small number of

persons cherished his work with warm affection and admiration ; he was cheered by their appreciation, and met it with simple-hearted gratitude. He died on December 18th, 1889.

Ashe was a true singer, with a personal and attractive note of his own. He has failed to make any deep impress on the literature of his time, partly, it seems, because his range was so limited, partly, perhaps, because while his work was so genuine and spontaneous there was some lack of severity in self-judgment, and it fell short of perfection. It must be said also that while his work at the best possesses delicacy, charm, pathos, it is always wanting in that robust energy which, in art as well as in life, seems an essential element of success. His longer poems are mostly failures ; "Edith," the longest of all, possesses unity, indeed, and a pleasant though faint aroma of the poet's peculiar quality ; and there is in its workmanship a remarkable evenness of level, but it is rather a low level. "The Sorrows of Hypsipyle" is the best of these long poems. Like the others it is lacking in strength, but there is a certain breadth of vision about it, and a true breath of Greek feeling ; its refinement never becomes trivial, and the final impression satisfies. But it is only in the short song that he reaches his finest and most personal utterance.

This poet—a fairy changeling, as he called himself,—

"for this that seems
Myself, would best befit a world of dreams,"

—is, above all, the singer of April and of all April

moods, its elusive caprices, its May before and its burden of reminiscence behind ; when

“angels swing in poplar tops ;
And buds are stirring underground ;
And Spring is dreamy in the copse ;
And gay the merry wheel goes round ;
And soft winds linger by the mill ;
And in wet wood-paths meet at will
Sweet scents, and primroses abound.”

He sings of the dawns of things, of desires unfulfilled, of daffodils that break their sheaths, of children whose “faces are like flowers half-blown ;” always there is a fresh rain of Spring tears on his pages. As with the Minnesingers, it is only in the Spring that his voice is heard—he has nothing to tell of the months before March, and June’s fruitions lie always ahead—and he wanders away to the coppice as when he was a child. He has told in the “Lost Eros” how, in Spring, once, Psyche-like, he found the golden boy with ivory shoulders and wondrous eyes, and how he refused to clasp and kiss him, turning away as those vessels of old that neared Siren shores. Now the face of Eros gleams for ever in dreams, and in vain the poet goes seeking along the withered, dewless years to find him and clasp him at last. Life, therefore, to the poet comes to consist largely of dreams ; before him flit hopes which he dallies with, while he knows that they are but a mirage ; and he goes on his way with the pensive burden of an ever-increasing sheaf of memories, and always an ache of sorrow—“a sweet-set sorrow sung in dreams”—at his heart. For the life lived in this temper, the world that it builds around it is an edifice formed of reverie rather than

of the healthful energies of the normal man, and it twines into itself for consolation the sweet sights and sounds of Nature.

Ashe sang of many things: of his own sad or glad moods, and with delicate realism of the little incidents of daily life that called them up; sometimes of old far-off dreams of love—Psamathe, Plectrude, Hildegard, Yseult; from the first and always, of streams and birds and flowers, weaving them carelessly together to lull an aching heart. Above all he has sung of children, especially of girls budding into womanhood. Very sweet and real are these children; very sensitive and tender his touch upon them. They form a long procession throughout his poems—Ettie, Annette, Fay, Avice, Ethel, Elfin Kattie, above all Marit and Pansie, to both of whom he has dedicated exquisite cycles of song, full of varied and delicate little love episodes. He becomes the companion of his child friends; they teach him their fairy tales; his tremulous sympathy with child-life is ever finding fresh expression; himself, he has "most ease of heart when most a child." At the same time there is now and again something not quite virile and wholesome, a certain touch of perversity, in this absorbed brooding on child-life, exquisite as is sometimes its expression.

This singer has no strange, startling lines, few curious felicities of diction. Even in his best work there is a certain carelessness, in his later work also a classic inversion of language which comes short of perfection. Thomas Ashe is not among the great master-singers; his force lies in the simple sincerity of accent with which he has rendered the intimate

experiences of his inner life. For those who pause to listen to his quiet song it is a permanent source of delight.

HAVELOCK ELLIS.

* * The facts and dates here given were mostly supplied by the poet. The dates of some of the volumes, published about Christmas, were advanced a year on the title-page. I may add that I have made free use of a paper of my own on "Thomas Ashe's Poems" in the *Westminster Review*, April 1886. —H. E.

EARLIER POEMS.

1855-1862.

THOMAS ASHE.

I.—ETTIE.

IN a valley, with sweet rills,
Bosom'd in the slanting hills,
Where the rich September fed
Leaves with deepening tints of red,
I, when morning skies were blue,
Made a friendship pure and true.

Ettie, Ettie, for your sake,
Let my thought in music break
On the shore of memory,
Since you were so dear to me.

Gentle Ettie, pet ! she looks
Like some child in fairy books.
In her eyes, that seem to fix
On the airy void around,
Motions of the playful wind,
Light and shadow melt and mix
With each other, undefined.
Hid from us, what has she found,
In dreamy fancies of her mind ?
Ettie is some changeling sweet,
That walks this earth with elfin feet.

Oft she seems to look and ask
Elves their secrets to unmask.
She is watching, as she stands,
Wonders wrought in fairy lands.
Elfin phantoms flit and fleet,
Making signs with shadowy hands.

Ettie sweet, Ettie sweet,
All the day she will not speak.
In the woods and meadow ways
Airy forms she seems to seek.
All alone she goes to meet
Them at the appointed place.
A sunset warmth is on her cheek ;
A glow of rosy light, a flush
Half of health and half a blush.

If you speak, or if you smile,
She will not talk as children do ;
She is silent all the while.
Or perhaps a bashful "yes,"
Faintly heard, her answer is.
She scarcely seems to speak to you.
Her dropp'd eyes, but half at ease,
Peer about to find release ;
With a sweet bewildering pain,
Like flowers in the wind and rain.

Many a time, through wood and wild,
I went nutting with the child.
Timid-heart, my hand she took,
At the bridge across the brook.
Up through woods and tangled grass
We clamber'd where no pathway was :
While the freshly-blowing breeze
Of the scarry deep ravine

Play'd about the hazel trees ;
Where the mountain berries red
In the glancing sun were seen
Clustering richly overhead.
On and on we winding went :
We closely peer'd in every tree :
And if the childish eyes were bent,
Through the branches up to me,—
Dreamy looks, I wonder not
I the lusty nuts forgot.

We went up a rivulet,
One fair sunny afternoon :
Oft her eyes were vaguely set,
Listening to the murmur'd tune.
We made a ship,—how small and frail !
With a feather for a sail :
Yet the child-heart seem'd to feel
Fear and pity for its weal ;
Over falls and wreckful reef
Guiding it with anxious grief.
With happy hearts we swam the bark
Till early stars lit up the dark,
Till the softly-falling night
Shadow'd all the brooklet sands ;
While she shouted with delight,
Laugh'd, or clapp'd her tiny hands.

How many a dusty mile my feet
Roam'd, to hear the laughter sweet !
To hoard the tender, quaint replies,
And meanings of the sweet grey eyes !

II.—AVICE ETHEL.

A VICE Ethel's peaceful face,
Though a village girl she be,
Is a blessed thing to keep
In your fancy, seems to me.
Often it before me slips,
Coming like a dear surprise;
With its grace about the lips,
And its sweetness round the eyes.
Though she often finds the world
Not so kind and somewhat hard,
Twenty summers leave a charm
Twenty winters have not marr'd.
Avice Ethel has not seen
Twenty years without their pain;
Yet, whate'er her griefs have been,
Surely grief has turn'd to gain.
Such a gulf between us yawns,—
Though an idle fear it be,
Somehow I feel half afraid,
When she looks and smiles on me.
Kindness is so catching, too:—
Avice Ethel, how is this?
That I cannot look at you,
But I long to steal a kiss?
This world it is selfish grown.
We must covet all the flowers.
Now we cannot like a thing,
But we long to make it ours.
Why should we go plucking so
Every pretty flower we see?
Why can I not let you grow,
Like a rosebud, on the tree?

Am I, now, the only one
Fitted to delight in you ?
God has made your sweetness for
Every simple soul and true.
Yea, I think, God scarcely meant
Anyone to claim you, child :
But would keep you, quite content,
Like a cowslip, growing wild.

You live in a village, hid
Sweetly, out of thought and sight.
Any stranger passing by,
Sees your beauty with delight.
So, when through a wood we pass,
We may see a wild-flower grow.
We might miss it in the grass :
Yet God set it there, we know.

God will never care to look
On the rich before the poor.
He would not a palace love
Better than a cottage door.
What He makes, He makes it well :
Means it for all human-kind.
Is it lilies in a dell ?
Anyone who goes may find.

So may any villager
Look on Avice Ethel's face,
Thinking it was made for him,
With its ruddy, simple grace.
It is very happy, too !
Bless God that He made it so.
Bless God that He gave it you
Past the cottages to go.

III.—SYMPATHY.

IS nature all so beautiful ?
The human feeling makes it so :
The sounds we love, the flowers we cull,
Are hallow'd with man's joy or woe.

The little speedwell's tender blue
Is not so pure and delicate,
As is the simple wish in you
That will its tardy advent wait.

The breezy hush, the rustling change,
Of leaves that on the poplar shake,
Are not so sweet, or half so strange,
As flutter in your heart they make.

The tiny drops of dew, that shine
Upon the leaflets new and rare,
Are scarcely half so crystal-fine
As your delight to watch them there.

The wishing for the green of trees
Is fresher than the leaves that come :
The blowing of a scented breeze
Is sweetest round a happy home.

The ripple of a tranquil bay,
The water-lisp in curve or creek,
Are softest on the welcome day
We trust to find some friend we seek.

O human men and women, all !
With human feelings, strange and fine !
O hopes, O meanings mystical !
O joy divine ; O woe divine !

PICTURES OF PSYCHE.

1864.

THOMAS ASHE.

(III.)

O SWEET is praise ! and sweet to be admired !
But to be loved is sweeter ! Victims wreath'd
With garlands, and the music of a feast,
May please a goddess, but a woman craves
Quiet, and little children round her knees.

So princess Psyche thought upon the lot
Of her two sisters, who were not so fair,
And would have given her beauty willingly,
To be as they. Men came to worship her ;
Men came to praise her ; but none came to woo :
For as a statue on a pedestal,
Carved out of marble by a sculptor's skill,
They look'd on her, and wonder'd, and were gone.

So, when she pined and fretted, and consumed
With weeping her rich treasure,—hating it,
The more that all men loved it,—it was clear
How this would end. Then came the grieving king
To old Miletus, to the oracle,
And craved the wish'd-for blessing for his child.

But god Apollo spake ambiguously,
Till blessing seem'd but cursing :—bitter words :—

"High on the craggy mountain's barren crown
The bridegroom waits. He is not of this world.

Prepare the couch funereal ! lead the bride !
He is no mortal, but a viperous birth :—
Dire mischief, fierce and cruel. As he flies
Through ether, desolating all the world,
Zeus trembles, and the Stygian Furies cower
Into a deeper darkness.—But he waits !
Prepare the couch funereal ! lead the bride ! ”

O there was wailing in the palaces,
And scattering of cold ashes ! for they cried,—
“ The wrath of Heaven has fall’n ! the doom is come ! ”

(IV.)

So many a day pass’d o’er in grief and tears,
And all the city sorrow’d with its king.
The people spake with trembling, and the streets
Were desolate in the noonday. Till at length
The hour drew near,—the inevitable hour.

Then like a vaporous streak along the line
Of misty summits of a mountain range,
Black with its pent-up thunder and its rain,
The long procession gather’d. So began
The deadly nuptials. Many a flickering torch
Burn’d ashy, black and sooty. The sweet sounds
Of bride-protecting Herè’s happy pipes
Changed to a plaintive Lydian melody.
The wonted-gladdening hymeneal song
Sank to a dismal wailing. And the bride
Sullied her yellow veil with her salt tears.

Now with a sudden courage, whispering
Low words of solace to the unconsolated,
The maiden took her place : and many an hour
They climb’d the rough ruts to the barren crag.

Then, lingering,—with a cry, the rocky glens
Took up, and lull'd to music,—they trod out,
And threw aside, their torches ; and with sighs,
And drooping brows, pass'd on their homeward way.

And Psyche parted the loose wandering locks
From her pale forehead and her trembling knees ;
And saw them not, but only saw a star,
And gathering night,—and shriek'd. But Zephyrus,
Mysterious courier of the crafty god,
With his soft touch stole gently : cool'd the heat
Which burn'd her forehead : flutter'd in her breast :
Play'd with her garments : toy'd with her bright hair :
And with chaste, tenderest fingers lifting her,
Laid her in his smooth bosom : and adown
The mountain side dropp'd like a wild bird's plume,
Into the flowery hollow of the dell.

(v.)

PSYCHE, reclined upon the dewy bed
Of herbage, slept : and when she woke at morn,
She rose refresh'd, and full of happy thoughts.
What dreams had she, through the long starry night,—
A sad forsaken maiden ? But they were
Such dreams as made her cheeks glow like the rose.

Now with inquisitive and wondering eyes
Prying, she came upon a secret grove ;
And in the leafy inner sanctuary
She found a crystal fount :—and near the fall,—
Built as if to music of the fall,—
A palace : manifestly not the work
Of human hands, but of some demigod,
Or even a god :—so exquisitely wrought :
With such surpassing subtlety of art

The embedded silver made the pillars light.

She climb'd the steps of marble. She perceived
No "Cave canem" in the vestibule :
But "Enter, Psyche," in the polish'd slab,
Woven with golden vine-leaves. Charm'd, she peer'd
In at the open portal.

Not a sound
Came from the sculptured atrium : not a breath
Was audible, unless perchance her own,—
Chaste little fluttering heart ! Then, stealing in
On tip-toe ;—looking sideways, if the leaves
Of slim acacia rustled ;—stopping often,
And looking back, and listening ;—she grew bold ;
And, stepping firmly, wander'd through the rooms.

The lofty ceilings, curiously arch'd
With cedar and pale ivory, smiled, upheld
On golden columns. Underfoot, true gems
Flash'd up, in living pictures : and the walls
Were fretted and emboss'd with amethyst
And jacinth, into legends of the gods.
Here Bacchus and his rout, a motley scene :
And every lifted cymbal was a pearl.
Here gloomy Dis's steeds rose from the ground,
Dazed with the light, yet supple to his hand :
And fair Persephone look'd up among
The daffodils of Enna. But the pride
And masterpiece of all,—in which the skill
Of the celestial artist, you could see,
Had striven to overmatch his former toil,—
Was Paris with the apple. Herè there,
Her brows encinct with a white diadem,—
Wrought in with silver, pallid as the light

Of autumn evenings,—stood, composed and calm,
Holding a sceptre. But Athene wore
The glittering helmet, twisted with wild leaves
Of olive. As she frown'd, she shook on high
Her broad shield of blue metal, and her spear,
With threatening restless gesture. And the One,—
She, Aphrodite,—with an artful smile,
Stoop'd to her troop of little winged Loves.
They, dancing round her, like the arrowy flames
Of torches which they brandish'd, were as fair
As summer roses, which the circling Hours
And neat-hair'd Graces scatter'd at her feet.

So Psyche, over-curious, could not rest,
Till she saw all : and follow'd her desire,
As sunlight tracks the shadow of a cloud :
And happy as the sunlight, lingering pleased :
And noiseless as the sunlight paused her foot.
And when her limbs wearied with wandering
From chamber unto chamber, she reclined
Upon a silken couch, and would have slept ;
But could not for strange fancies. Then arose
The sweetest music she had ever heard,
And voices heavenlier, singing. They were not
Far off, but near her. Silence seem'd to take
A stealthy minute to reveal she had
Utterance more sweet than sound. She did but dream !
Surely she dream'd !

So, putting back the waste
Of ringlets, fallen upon her face awhile,
She lean'd upon her elbow.

Then one spake,
And sweetly solved the riddle :—" Mistress, rest :
Your limbs are weary. We will watch beside

The couch, and call soft sleep to seal your eyes.
Then we will lead you to the bath, and make
Your beauty fresh as morning. Then recline,
And taste our banquet. We are handmaidens.
If it were not our office,—which it is,—
Still it would be our pleasure.”

Psyche, pleased,
Obey'd. They sang. Slow sleep came at their call;
And passing by the couch, perceived, and touch'd
The eyelids of the maiden. Evening fell.
The bath refresh'd her. The rich banquet took
Fair order without hands,—nectar and flowers,
And glossy, pulpy fruits. A damsel touch'd,
With subtlest art, her lyre. And when the night
Fell on her, unexpected, she was led,
In a sweet trance, on to the nuptial couch,
And wondering, but not fearful, bade them go.

And when the midnight, like an oracle,
Grew ominous with strange mystery, Eros came.

(VI.)

Now, ere the first faint streak of dawn could gleam
Athwart the chamber, Eros stole away.
But rosy-finger'd morning lightly climb'd
The dewy hill-tops, and awoke the bride.
And waking, she remember'd, and she blush'd :
And missing him, she started. And her tears
Would soon have fallen : but the handmaidens,
Unseen, consoled her, singing his return.
So roving,—not unhappily,—beside
The stony channel of the mountain rill,
She caught the babbling music now and then :
But mostly dream'd away the idle morn.
And sleeping in the afternoon, and then

Questioning the gentle voices, it was night.
And so to rest : and then he came again.

And summer days wore on. When midnight wrapt
All things in sleep, he came : before day's light
Could dally with the dew-drops, he was gone.
And Psyche pray'd at last,—“Love, stay awhile.
Your wife would look upon the lips that kiss
So softly in the darkness. She would watch
The light in those pale diamonds, which are eyes,
And see the colour of the ambrosial hair.”
But Eros kiss'd her, trembling, and he said,—
“Ask not. The darkness blesses us. The day
Brings only deeper darkness.”

She obey'd.

She never ask'd to look on him again.
But, brooding on the mystery, she was sad ;
And often wept in secret. She believed :
But doubt, which is the shadow of true faith,
Eclipsed her joy. Why was it she recall'd
The oracle ? One sultry noon she dream'd.

As she was peering for a tiny flower,
Along the reedy margin of a pool,—
Which, many a time, the river in the vale
Fed with its floods, but now the summer dried,—
There glided, hissing, horrible, a snake,
In slimy folds. His neck was swollen with slime
Of deadly venom, and the gaping jaws
Yawn'd hideous : as he coil'd, his fetid breath
Blasted the queenly bulrush. But he shunn'd
The shuddering princess : glided like a flame
Of wind-blown fire along the sapless grass :
And found the river. She revived, and pass'd
Homeward, and met the huntsmen. They had seen

The monster in the evenings swimming home
Across the shoals. What was it they conceal'd?
They look'd upon each other, but they seem'd
To fear to look on her.

How many a time
Some idle phantom of a sleepless brain
Has seem'd a heaven-sent messenger of fate,
And lured poor victim to a treacherous end!
The evil we would flee so fascinates,
And like an angel charms, and is a fiend.
Psyche awoke and she believed the dream.
She fluctuated like a stormy sea,
Urged by the secret Furies. She recall'd
Legends of many a snared Olympias,
And horrid nuptials; and her heart was sick
With fear, till she could fathom her despair.
Alas! that she should fathom it! alas!
That mawworm doubt should gnaw the sweetest bud
That ever grew! O could she but have seen
The Fates, with restless fingers and still breath,
Sitting in deathlike beauty by her couch,
Spinning the speechless sorrow of her doom!

But now the words of Eros were as foam
The wind takes lightly from the toppling wave,
And her soul was the billow, roll'd in storm.
Now she was bold; she leap'd to seize the knife,
And guide it deftly through the glistening scales
About the neck: and now she trembled, weak
As unfledged nestling in the falcon's grip.
Now she would doubt, and dally with her dream,
And blame her fear as folly: then, again,
Flash into anger, to have been deceived.
Then she would hate him: then repent the hate,

Until she loved him wholly. But at last
She was resolved.

So, when the dreamless sleep
Of midnight seal'd his lids, she slipped away
From blissful peace, and standing with bare feet
Beside the couch, listen'd : but he was still.
Then stole she softly over the long floor,
And found a little secret cabinet ;
And took the agate lamp she had conceal'd
Within it, and she lit it ; and in haste
Regain'd the couch, shading the glittering light
With her raised hand.

Now minutes seem'd like years.
Now every second seem'd a lingering hour.
She shudder'd, as she touch'd the curtaining folds ;
And her weak fingers might have been as old
As some old wither'd crone's, which crave a coin.
And when she would have drawn the folds aside,
She stopp'd, and trembled at the rustling sound
Of ominous leaves stirr'd by the midnight wind.
And then strange footsteps seem'd to pass across
The slippery floor :—but think it not the Fates.
They kept their post, spinning away the while,
And they were still,—as stars in heaven, as tears.

And yet she drew the curtain,—yet she drew it.
Still she would solve the mystery,—and she did.
Still she would look upon the face of him
She wedded : and,—in scorn of oracles,—
In scorn of fear, of warning,—she did look.
What then ? What saw she ? Did the dragon-folds
Gleam like pale yellow moonbeams on some lake,
Half hid beneath the treacherous coverlet ?

Was he but feigning sleep, and well awake,
And did he freeze her with his glistening eye ?
What did the lamp flare bright to look upon,
But him, the loveliest, Eros,—loveliest
And gentlest of wild creatures ?

Ah me, then,—

Then, when she should even have fear'd the most,
Her fear was gone ! She thought not of her fault,
And so forgot requital ! But she saw
Eros : she read the oracle aright :
She laugh'd for joy, bewilder'd !

Faint and pale ,

And fluttering like a bird which knows the hand
That fondles it, yet trembles, being so much
At mercy of the fondler, she beheld
The genial locks smile on the golden head,
And, curling softly o'er the milk-white neck,
Stray, gracefully entangled. She beheld
The shining shoulders, and the rosy wings,
At rest, but with the tender down, that fringed
Their feathers, wantoning in her sweet breath,
In tremulous unceasing play. She knew
This god,—divine, beautiful, such a one
As Aphrodite could be proud to claim,—
Her own. She stoop'd to kiss him, meaning so
Lightly to touch his cheek with her soft lips,
He should not feel their pressure.—And the end
Was come. The brittle chalice of her joy,—
Though carven curiously, and painted fair
With sweet device, and many a flower of bliss,—
Broke with the touch. A little drop of oil
Oozed from the agate lamp, and fell upon
His shoulder, and he woke with a wild start,
And frown'd upon her, and she shriek'd and fell.

LATER POEMS.

1866—1876.

THOMAS ASHE.

I.—ÆDE.

MY lady's eyes are strangely fair ;
Whose keener light is chiefly hid
'Neath softness of a drooped lid,
Which else were more than I could bear :
Her name sounds musically clear,—
Æde, praised the gods amid ;
Once named of men the Castalid,
From fount she loved to linger near.
To hear her voice is more than all
Vain fleeting joys terrestrial.
The beauty of her look to see,
And serene presence, is to me
As great a joy as heaven could be.

The winds, that in the leaves make stir,
Chant to me of my lady's praise ;
The thrushes sing her gracious ways,
The reeds and grasses sigh of her :
The nightingales at eve prepare
A choral tribute with their lays ;
And summer days and winter days,
In mystic whispers, name her fair.
The lark, hid in the morning's sheen,
Gives joyful greeting to my queen.
The young cheep, in the nest awake :
The little ripples on the lake
Curvet and dimple for her sake.

My lady in a sunbeam comes :
Ofttimes, in unfamiliar guise,
She plays around me spirit-wise,
Till days are blissful martyrdoms :
I follow where her footfall roams :
Now in a woodland flower she lies :
Now like shy echo makes replies,
O'er meadows where the bold bee hums.
And oft she greets me from afar,
In sacred fashion of a star.
With winds, moonbeams, and leaves she blends :
By placid bays, and river bends,
Her face my solitude befriends.

The Cyprian's star, at set of day,
Lights mortal lovers to their bliss :
It shines a lesser light than this
Of my unstain'd Urania ;
Which beams with a diviner ray
Than hers, that gladdens erring eyes,
Where quiet sails, 'neath evening skies,
Droop, trancèd, in some Eastern bay.
No earthly love could lure me so,
That I should my divine forego.
No earthly beauty can devise
A snare of kisses or soft sighs,
To match the rapture of those eyes.

My lady comes in spring-time, when
The land is green with April showers :
Her foot's soft impress on the flowers
Charms winding lane and wooded glen.
And oft as summer brings again
Their faint scent to the jasmine bowers,

I lie at her white feet for hours,
Sequester'd from the haunts of men.
She finds me in deep solitudes
Of autumn's leaf-enchanted woods.
Comes winter,—in she loves to glide,
And, hand in mine, will sit beside
The crackling woodlogs, like a bride.

When, in some bitter hour, I bow
My head, with anguish and despair ;
And fruit, whose blossom grew so fair,
Is dust between my lips, somehow ;
And life, once beautiful, seems now
A waif upon a sea of care ;
She, loved heart's-comforter, lays there
Her cool hand on my heated brow.
Æde, my desire, my all !
In reverence at her feet I fall :
And calm comes to me by degrees :
And all my tears and miseries
Her gentle accents lull to peace.

Sometimes a hidden nook I find,
In thicket under elm or oak ;
Where nothing, save the woodman's stroke,
Far off, brings sound of humankind :
Then, in a dream, she stoops to bind
My reason with her blissful yoke :
Not vainly will man's lip invoke
The mistress in his arms entwined.
I lie in a wild ecstasy,
And tremble as she clings to me.
Her breath is sweeter than the south :
I drink, to quench my spirit's drouth,
Red wine of kisses at her mouth.

Sometimes, when midnight swathes the earth,
 And labour gains a lease of ease ;
 And dreams beguile to equal peace
 Spent noise of weeping and of mirth ;
 My life dies, in a nobler birth ;
 My soul with clearer vision sees :
 She quickens with her harmonies
 Poor phantasies, else little worth.
 Beneath her half-closed lashes gleams
 Glance fairer than divinest dreams.
 Then I know, in a mystery,
 My lady's love is more to me
 Than gauds of world-old vanity.

Abysses of oblivion,
 Take this world's honours I despise :
 Soul, to her glory set thine eyes,
 And put a stately ardour on ;
 And sandals of truth paragon,
 And raiment, woven of beauty's dyes ;
 Heart-set to earn a nobler prize
 Than earthly guerdons, which are none.
 Such vestal purity improve
 Thee, soul, to fashion of her love ;
 That haply the hid eyes you praise
 Shall graciously dropp'd lids upraise,
 And days be heaven, and nights days.

II.—NO AND YES.

IF I could choose my paradise,
 And please myself with choice of bliss,
 Then I would have your soft blue eyes
 And rosy little mouth to kiss ;
 Your lips, as smooth and tender, child,
 As rose-leaves in a coppice wild.

If fate bade choose some sweet unrest,
To weave my troubled life a snare,
Then I would say "her maiden breast,
And golden ripple of her hair ;"
And weep amid those tresses, child,
Contented to be thus beguiled.

III.—LOST EROS.

I KNOW it fell in Spring :—in Spring,
Of old, my feet went wandering
In a garden ground ;
And in the sunniest spot of all,
Beside a blossom'd orchard wall,
A shady arbour found.

I look'd within : the loveliest face
Smiled 'mid the silence of the place,
Of a golden boy :
His eyes were wonderful to see,
His shoulders were as ivory,
His lips but little coy.

He said,—and smiled : his words were still
And sweet :—" If you have but the will,
Rest beside me, here.
To clasp me close, and kiss these eyes,
Is as the bliss of Paradise.
None listens : none is near."

I said, " I know you, Love : I know
The snares you weave for those who go
Idlers in the land."
I cried, " Away ! Love, bind not me !"
Turn'd, as a vessel holds to sea,
When near a Siren strand.

Now gleams his face in dreams : I pass
Along the wither'd dewless grass,
And in vain I sigh,
To find him, touch him, cling to him,
To kiss him, till my eyes grow dim ;
To clasp him till I die.

IV.—TO TWO BEREAVED.

YOU must be sad ; for though it is to Heaven,
'Tis hard to yield a little girl of seven.
Alas, for me, 'tis hard my grief to rule,
Who only met her as she went to school ;
Who never heard the little lips so sweet
Say even "good morning," though our eyes would meet
As whose would fain be friends ! How must you sigh,
Sick for your loss, when even so sad am I,
Who never clasp'd the small hands any day !
Fair flowers thrive round the little grave, I pray.

V.—APOLOGIA.

NO rest save singing, but a song for friend,
Have I, and sing, forgotten, to the end.
O World, for me ne'er care to weave a crown,
Who hold your smile as lightly as your frown !
Yet I grow sad to think upon my songs,
For which no man, nor even a maiden, longs.
O my poor flowers, dead in the lap of spring !
I think it is too sad a harvesting
For such brave hopes, for such kind husbandry !
Yet I must still go singing till I die.

MARIT.

1869—1870.

THOMAS ASHE.

(X.)

C'EST UN SONGE QUE D'Y PENSER.

MY love, on a fair May morning,
Would weave a garland of may :
The dew hung frore, as her foot tripp'd o'er
The grass at dawn of the day ;
On leaf and stalk, in each green wood-walk,
Till the sun should charm it away.

Green as a leaf her kirtle,
Her bodice red as a rose :
Her white bare feet went softly and sweet
By roots where the violet grows ;
Where speedwells azure as heaven,
Their sleepy eyes half close.

O'er arms as fair as the lilies
No sleeves my love drew on :
She found a bower of the wildrose flower,
And for her breast cull'd one :
And I laugh and know her breasts will grow
Or ever a year be gone.

O sweet dream, wrought of a dear fore-thought
Of a golden time to fall !
She seem'd to sing, in her wandering,
Till doves in the elm-tops tall
Grew mute to hear ; as her song rang clear
How love is the lord of all.

AT ALTENAHR.

1872.

THOMAS ASHE.

(II.)

MEET WE NO ANGELS, PANSIE ?

CAME, on a Sabbath noon, my sweet,
In white, to find her lover ;
The grass grew proud beneath her feet,
The green elm-leaves above her :—
Meet we no angels, Pansie ?

She said, " We meet no angels now ;"
And soft lights stream'd upon her ;
And with white hand she touch'd a bough ;
She did it that great honour :—
What ! meet no angels, Pansie ?

O sweet brown hat, brown hair, brown eyes,
Down-dropp'd brown eyes, so tender !
Then what said I ?—gallant replies
Seem flattery, and offend her :—
But,—meet no angels, Pansie ?

BETTWS-Y-COED.

1879.

THOMAS ASHE.

(XXXIV.)

CHIDE NOT THE POET.

CHIDE not the poet, that he sits
All day on stones,
And dull routine
Of clerkly toil disowns.
His ear is fine, his wits
Subtle, his sight is keen :
The songs, such as befits,
Come not at once.
Look you, the painter there,
With pipe in mouth ;
Wife at his feet,
Reading the last romance ;
Nature to him is fair,
Go north or south,
And his reward is sweet :
The bard has no such ~~change~~ :
He is not as the rest :
He is eyed askance :
He suffers, loves, with all ;
He is timid, shy, afraid ;
In arms of every maid
He would be press'd ;
Yet at each glance
His lashes fall.
He is so sensitive,
Him pierce as swords
Little unmeaning words
Of hard men, used to live

In conflict with their likes :
Yet he's no fool ;
And lusty roots he strikes,—
Clings to the rock :
He studies in the world's high-school,
Hews statues from the block.
He paints :—his pictures vie
With the best cliques !
Him the Academy
Of heaven's elect,—him, least,—
Sets above rules, and seeks.
He is, too, priest ;
And marriage bands he knits :
His infant baptisms,
And hands on the young head,
His requiems for the dead,
Are real, not shams.
On throne episcopal he sits ;
He blesses wine and bread.
Idle ? His feet ne'er tire :
Plodding the public ways,
In square and market-place
He watches, evens and noons :
He is a lyre
On which the hours and days
Play their strange tunes.
Idle ? He toils as few :
His heart is stout :
He lives for you,
For you he daily dies ;
And who comes to him, buys
Red wine and milk, without
Money and without price.

LONDON LYRICS.

1887.

THOMAS ASHE.

(I.)

I.—PROLOGUE.

CHRIST look upon us in this city,
And keep our sympathy and pity
Fresh, and our faces heavenward ;
Lest we grow hard.

Had poor folk half they need, and pleasure
Of life, in reasonable measure,—
But food and raiment,—few of all
Would sin or fall.

Life scarce can tread majestically
Foul court and fever-stricken alley :
It is the rich, must be confess'd,
Are blamefullest.

(II.)

II.—A VISION OF CHILDREN.

I DREAM'D I saw a little brook
Run rippling down the Strand ;
With cherry-trees and apple-trees
Abloom on either hand :
The sparrows gather'd from the squares,
Upon the branches green ;
The pigeons flock'd from Palace-Yard,
Afresh their wings to preen ;

And children down St. Martin's Lane,
And out of Westminster,
Came trooping, many a thousand strong,
With a bewilder'd air.

They hugg'd each other round the neck,
And titter'd for delight,
To see the yellow daffodils,
And see the daisies white ;
They roll'd upon the grassy slopes,
And drank the water clear,
While 'buses the Embankment took,
Ashamed to pass anear ;
And sandwich-men stood still aghast,
And costermongers smiled ;
And a policeman on his beat
Pass'd, weeping like a child.

(III.)

III.—THE CITY CLERK.

'TIS strange how my head runs on ! 'tis a puzzle to
understand

Such fancies stirring in me, for a whiff of hay in the
Strand !

I see the old farmhouse, and garden wall, and the
bees ;

I see the mowers stretch'd, with their bottles, under
the trees ;

I hear the little brook aripple down in the dell ;

I hear the old-folk croon—"Our son, he is doing
well !"

O yes, I am doing well ; but I'd be again, for a day,
A simple farmer's lad, among the girls in the hay.

(iv.)

IV.—A MACHINE HAND.

MY little milliner has slipp'd
The doctors, with their drugs and ways :
Her years were only twenty-two,
Though long enough her working-days.
At eight she went, through wet or snow,
Nor dallied, for the sun to shine ;
And walk'd an hour to work, and home,
Content, if she was in by nine.
She had a little gloomy room,
Up stair on stair, within the roof ;
Where hung her pictures on the wall,
Wherever it was weather-proof.
She held her head erect and proud,
Nor ask'd of man or woman aid ;
And struggled, till the last ; and died
But of the parish pit afraid.
Jennie, lie still ! The hair you loved
You wraps, unclipp'd, if you but knew !
We by a quiet graveyard wall,
For love and pity, buried you !

(v.)

V.—OLD JANE.

I LOVE old women best, I think :
She knows a friend in me,—
Old Jane, who totters on the brink
Of God's Eternity ;
Whose limbs are stiff, whose cheek is lean,
Whose eyes look up, afraid ;
Though you may gather she has been
A little laughing maid.

Once had she with her doll what times,
And with her skipping-rope !
Her head was full of lovers' rhymes,
Once, and her heart of hope ;
Who, now, with eyes as sad as sweet,—
I love to look on her,—
At corner of the gusty street,
Asks, " Buy a pencil, Sir ?"
Her smile is as the litten West,
Nigh-while the sun is gone ;
She is more fain to be at rest
Than here to linger on :
Beneath her lids the pictures flit
Of memories far-away :
Her look has not a hint in it
Of what she sees to day.

(x.)

VI.—EPILOGUE.

AS I went roaming
By street and square,
Flash'd in upon me,
Unaware,
The wrestling eddies,
And reeds a gleam,
Of grey Beddgelert's
Torrent-stream.
I saw it hurry
Along the glen ;
I knew the murmur
Once again,
The old-world measure,
Of hidden things,
Low in her bosom
Nature sings.

Theodore Watts-Dunton.

1836.

MR. THEODORE WATTS-DUNTON is one of the most original and also one of the most unobtrusive singers of our time. The closest friend of Dante Rossetti—his housemate in Cheyne Walk as now of Mr. Swinburne at Putney—the intimate friend of Tennyson, Browning, and William Morris Mr. Watts's life seems so enveloped in the poetic atmosphere of our time that his biography, when it comes to be written, will almost include the history of Victorian poetry in its later decades. And yet—owing to his habit of writing anonymously, and of "seeking," as Rossetti said, "obscurity as other men seek fame"—the general reader was until lately but little acquainted with his work.

In one of his essays the poet himself says: "Some poets there are without the 'last infirmity of noble minds'—poets to whom, as to Coleridge, poetry is its own exceeding great reward—poets who would rather have the appreciative sympathy of half a dozen well-equipped friends than all the noisy welcome of two hemispheres of incompetent applauders." And I cannot help reading into these words an autobiographical meaning. If it is true, as one of his poet-friends lately wrote of him, that

"Love of nature quells the thirst for fame,"

this may account, in some measure, for his unobtrusiveness in literature. He is known to have had the

training of a naturalist, and to be an eager and skilled student of Nature. The question as to what effect for good and for ill a knowledge of natural science has upon the born poet has been admirably discussed by Mr. Earl Hodgson in his introduction to "The New Day," a sonnet-sequence by Dr. Gordon Hake. According to Mr. Earl Hodgson the only three poets who have a scientific knowledge of the new cosmogony are Dr. Wendell Holmes, Dr. Hake, and Mr. Watts-Dunton. The first mentioned of these seemingly renounced the Muse and all her works, to judge from an essay in "Over the Teacups," while the two others were more and more attracted by her, and, indeed, "The New Day" is a noble and impassioned exhortation to Mr. Watts-Dunton to give to poetry his life in full. There is only space for one of its fine sonnets here.

"Fulfil the new-born dream of Poesy!

Give her your life in full, she turns from less—
Your life in full—like those who did not die,
Though death holds all they sang in dark duress.
You, knowing Nature to the throbbing core,
You can her wordless prophecies rehearse.
The murmurs others heard her heart outpour
Swell to an anthem in your richer verse,
If wider vision brings a wider scope
For art, and depths profounder for emotion,
Yours be the song whose master-tones shall open
A new poetic heaven o'er earth and ocean.
The New Day comes apace; its virgin fame
Be yours, to fan the fiery soul to flame."

My own opinion is that the poet's study of Nature will serve to explain that "eloquent method and that perception of Nature's grander aspects," which the American critic Mr. Stedman finds, with

truth, to be one of the best characteristics of his poetry. Mr. Stedman specially alluded to "The Ode to Mother Carey's Chicken" (p. 257), in regard to which he says the writer "apparently seeks to revive the broad feeling of the Georgian leaders; at all events, his touch is quite independent of any bias derived from the eminent poets with whom his life has been closely associated."

But this large and "eloquent method" is, I should have said, even more noticeable in certain of the poet's sonnets than in the poem specialised by Mr. Stedman, and in none is it more apparent than in the two now famous companion-sonnets "*Natura Benigna*" and "*Natura Maligna*," given in the following selections. In the former of these the largeness is seen in the expanse of the mountain scenery opened up within "the sonnet's narrow plot of ground." In the latter it is seen in the epic breadth of the conception where, in the space of fourteen lines is told, and fully told, the entire life-history of a soul encountered by the old and terrible enigma of Nature as a malignant, but still beautiful power. As "*Natura Benigna*" is representative of Nature after Philosophy has freed her from the attributes of Superstition, so "*Natura Maligna*" depicts Nature as viewed by superstitious eyes. And so universal is the application of this sonnet that the Orientalist, Sir George Birdwood, said (*Athenæum*, Feb. 5, 1881): "Even in its very epithets it is just such a hymn as a Hindu Puritan (Saivite) would address to Kali ('the malignant') or Parvati ('the mountaineer'). It is to be delivered from her that Hindus shriek to God in the delirium of their fear." To express so large a conception as this in a single

sonnet of four rhymes would, of course, have been impossible, except to a poet who had made compression a special aim. Perhaps, indeed, this compression may be carried too far in some of these sonnets, such, for instance, as "The Damsel of the Plain"; while the same objection might be urged against one or two of the fine sea poems entitled "Sonnets from the Channel." Sometimes, also the gorgeousness of Mr. Watts-Dunton's diction appears excessive. An instance of what I mean is observable in the following mystical sonnet entitled "The Rosy Scar." This sonnet describes the appearance of the spirit of Father Rosenkreutz to some Christian slaves toiling on board a Moslem slave ship—Father Rosenkreutz, who, according to a legend, returns to earth in the form of a "rosy phantom" on Christmas Eve to comfort the remnant of the faithful.

THE ROSY SCAR.

"While Night's dark horses waited for the wind,
He stood—he shone—where Sunset's fiery glaives
Flickered behind the clouds; then, o'er the waves,
He came to them, Faith's remnant sorrow-thinned.
The Paynim sailors clustering, tawny-skinned,
Cried 'Who is he that comes to Christian slaves?
Nor water-sprite nor jinni of sunset caves,
The rosy phantom stands nor winged nor finned.'

All night he stood till shone the Christmas-star;
Slowly the Rosy Cross, streak after streak,
Flushed the grey sky—flushed sea and sail and spar,
Flushed, blessing every slave's woe-wasted cheek,
Then did great Rosenkreutz, the Dew-King, speak:
'Sufferers, take heart, Christ lends the Rosy Scar.'

Here the rich colour of the picture so impresses the reader that he is apt to overlook the great

lesson of the mission of suffering which the sonnet is intended to inculcate. But neither in this, nor in any other case, can it be said that the music of the rhythm has been sacrificed to concentration.

An equally remarkable instance of this power of "compressing an Iliad into a nutshell" is seen in the following group of sonnets on "The Three Fausts" of Berlioz, Gounod, and Schumann. The idea at the heart of each of these three grand compositions is rendered into verse by these sonnets as adequately as it is rendered by the music.

THE THREE FAUSTS.

I.—THE MUSIC OF HELL.

I had a dream of wizard harps of hell
 Beating through starry worlds a pulse of pain
 That held them shuddering in a fiery spell,
 Yea, spite of all their songs—a fell refrain
 Which, leaping from some red orchestral sun,
 Through constellations and through eyeless space
 Sought some pure core of bale, and finding one
 (An orb whose shadows flickering on her face
 Seemed tragic shadows from some comic mime,
 Incarnate visions mouthing hopes and fears
 That Fate was playing to the Fiend of Time),
 Died in a laugh 'mid oceanic tears:
 "Berlioz," I said, "thy strong hand makes me weep,
 That God did ever wake a world from sleep."

II.—THE MUSIC OF EARTH.

I had a dream of golden harps of earth:
 And when they shook the web of human life,
 The warp of sorrow and the weft of mirth,
 Divinely trembling in a blissful strife,
 Seemed answering in a dream that master-song
 Which built the world and lit the holy skies.
 Oh, then my listening soul waxed great and strong
 Till my flesh trembled at her high replies!

But when the web seemed answering lower strings
Which hymn the temple at the god's expense,
And bid the soul fly low on fleshly wings
To gather dew—rich honey-dews of sense,
“Gounod,” I said, “I love that siren-breath,
Though with it chimes the throbbing heart of Death.”

III.—THE MUSIC OF HEAVEN.

I had a dream of azure harps of heaven
Beating through starry worlds a pulse of joy,
Quickening the light with Love's electric leaven,
Quelling Death's hand, uplifted to destroy,
Building the rainbow there with tears of man
High over hell, bright over Night's abysses,
The arc of sorrow in a smiling span
Of tears of many a lover's dying kisses,
And tears of many a Gretchen's towering sorrow,
And many a soul fainting for dearth of kin,
And many a soul that hath but night for morrow,
And many a soul that hath no day but sin ;
“Schumann,” I said, “thine is a wondrous story
Of tears so bright they dim the seraphs' glory.”

Mr. Watts-Dunton is one of the very few contemporary poets who have a scientific knowledge of music. Musicians have often rendered verbal expression into music, but the attempt to render music into verse is rare. Nor is music a very common theme for verse ; though, curiously enough, Browning, the least musical of our modern poets in rhythm, not only loved music, but often made it his theme. The musical reader will see at once that, in each case, the sonnet gives not only the musical idea of each composition, but gives it in a poetical movement answering to the musical style of the composer. This is made most obvious, perhaps, in the first sonnet of the three, where Berlioz's intricate music is rendered with wonderful art by the involution of

the verses. The expanse of the astral system in which the earth moves, seems to hang before the reader's eyes as the "pulse of pain" leaps out from the central sun "through constellations and through eyeless space," and finds a home at last in "the painful earth." And, almost equally large is the scope of the third sonnet, that on the Faust of Schumann. The musical reader will observe that the glorious enthusiasm of Schumann's divine strain is rendered by the rising of the cæsural effects from the first line to the last. And, when it is remembered that these great effects are produced in such small space, the remarkable character of the *tour de force* will be recognised. These sonnets are in that form in which some of his best work is found—the Shakespearian—though, owing to the success of "Natura Benigna" and "Natura Maligna," his name is more generally associated with the Petrarchan form.

So much attention has been directed to Mr. Watts-Dunton's sonnets, that it has become the fashion to speak of him as though the sonnet were the vehicle particularly adapted for the expression of his powers. Such a remark, however, tends unduly to limit his resources. Spontaneity, such as we see in "Mother Carey's Chicken," is a marked characteristic of his work, and the freer the play that any form gives to this spontaneity the better. For it must be remembered that Mr. Watts-Dunton is not merely a nature poet. There are those who consider that his passionate love poetry, such as we get in "A Dream" (p. 274), in the "First Kiss" (p. 273), in "The Heaven that Was" (p. 274), is, in its essence, more truly poetical than the verses inspired by nature.

Nor must we forget that in poems like "Christmas at the Mermaid," or in the sonnet called "Australia's Mother" (p. 280), written at the moment when the Australian contingent set out for Egypt, the most obvious note is vigorous patriotism. "Christmas at the Mermaid," which has been called by Mr. Swinburne a "lyrical epic," has already taken its place among the patriotic poems of England. "The Shadow on the Window Blind" (p. 280) derives a special interest from the fact that it was composed on a summer night of 1873, at Kelmscott Manor, the famous old house occupied by Rossetti and William Morris, and is an exhortation to Rossetti to quit his work and take his customary moonlight stroll along the banks of the Thames.

In 1897 many of the poems here given were included in his volume "The Coming of Love," which volume at once gained a wide popularity, quickly reaching its sixth edition. Following this (in 1898) was published his famous novel "Aylwin," registered by Lord Acton as the first of the three most important books which appeared in England in 1898. Upwards of 100,000 copies were sold, and in a comparatively short time it attained to its twenty-sixth English edition, including that of "The World's Classics." In 1905 was issued Mr. James Douglas's "Theodore Watts-Dunton: Poet, Novelist, Critic," an elaborate study of this author's work.

MACKENZIE BELL.

SELECTIONS FROM "THE COMING OF
LOVE."

I.—MOTHER CAREY'S CHICKEN.

(PERCY AYLWIN, ON SEEING A STORM-PETREL IN A CAGE ON
A COTTAGE WALL NEAR GYPSY DELL, TAKES DOWN THE
CAGE WITH THE VIEW OF RELEASING THE BIRD.)

THEODORE WATTS-DUNTON.

I CANNOT brook thy gaze, beloved bird ;
That sorrow is more than human in thine eye ;
Too deeply, brother, is my spirit stirred
To see thee here, beneath the landsmen's sky,
Cooped in a cage with food thou canst not eat,
Thy "snow-flake" soiled, and soiled those conquering feet
That walked the billows, while thy "*sweet-sweet-sweet*"
Proclaimed the tempest nigh.

Bird whom I welcomed while the sailors cursed,
Friend whom I blessed wherever keels may roam,
Prince of my childish dreams, whom mermaids nursed
In purple of billows—silver of ocean-foam,
Abashed I stand before the mighty grief
That quells all other : Sorrow's King and Chief,
Who rides the wind and holds the sea in fief,
Then finds a cage for home !

From out thy jail thou seest yon heath and woods,
But canst thou hear the birds or smell the flowers ?
Ah, no ! those rain-drops twinkling on the buds
Bring only visions of the salt sea-showers.
"The sea !" the linnets pipe from hedge and heath ;
"The sea !" the honeysuckles whisper and breathe,
And tumbling waves, where those wild-roses wreath,
Murmur from inland bowers.

These winds so soft to others,—how they burn!

The mavis sings with gurgle and ripple and plash,
To thee yon swallow seems a wheeling tern;
And when the rain recalls the briny lash,
Old Ocean's kiss we love—oh, when thy sight
Is mocked with Ocean's horses—manes of white,
The long and shadowy flanks, the shoulders bright—
Bright as the lightning's flash —

When all these scents of heather and brier and whin,
All kindly breaths of land-shrub, flower, and vine,
Recall the sea-scents, till thy feathered skin
Tingles in answer to a dream of brine,—
When thou, remembering there thy royal birth,
Dost see between the bars a world of dearth,
Is there a grief—a grief on all the earth—
So heavy and dark as thine ?

But I can buy thy freedom—I (thank God !),
Who loved thee more than albatross or gull—
Loved thee, and loved the waves thy footsteps trod—
Dream'd of thee when, becalmed, we lay a-hull—
'Tis I, thy friend, who once, a child of six,
To find where Mother Carey fed her chicks,
Climbed up the boat and then with bramble sticks
Tried all in vain to scull,—

Thy friend who shared thy Paradise of Storm—
The little dreamer of the cliffs and coves,
Who knew thy mother, saw her shadowy form
Behind the cloudy bastions where she moves,
And heard her call : "Come! for the welkin thickens,
And tempests mutter and the lightning quickens!"
Then, starting from his dream, would find the chickens
Were daws or blue rock-doves,—

Thy friend who owned another Paradise,
Of calmer air, a floating isle of fruit,
Where sang the Nereids on a breeze of spice,
While Triton, from afar, would sound salute :
There wast thou winging, though the skies were calm ;
For marvellous strains, as of the morning's shalm,
Were struck by ripples round that isle of palm
Whose shores were Ocean's lute.

And now to see thee here, my king, my king,
Far-glittering memories mirror'd in those eyes,
As if there shone within each iris-ring
An orb'd world—ocean and hills and skies!—
Those black wings ruffled whose triumphant sweep
Conquered in sport!—yea, up the glimmering steep
Of highest billow, down the deepest deep,
Sported with victories!—

To see thee here!—a coil of wilted weeds
Beneath those feet that danced on diamond spray,
Rider of sportive Ocean's reinless steeds—
Winner in Mother Carey's Sabbath-fray
When, stung by magic of the Witch's chant,
They rise, each foamy-crested combatant—
They rise and fall and leap and foam and gallop and pant
Till albatross, sea-swallow, and cormorant
Must flee like doves away!

And shalt thou ride no more where thou hast ridden,
And feast no more in hyaline halls and caves,
Master of Mother Carey's secrets hidden,
Master and monarch of the wind and waves,
Who never, save in stress of angriest blast,
Asked ship for shelter—never till at last
The foam-flakes hurled against the sloping mast
Slashed thee like whirling glaives?

Right home to fields no seamew ever kened,
Where scarce the great sea-wanderer fares with thee,
I come to take thee—nay, 'tis I, thy friend!
Ah, tremble not—I come to set thee free;
I come to tear this cage from off this wall,
And take thee hence to that fierce festival
Where billows march and winds are musical,
Hymning the Victor-Sea!

* * * * *

Yea, lift thine eyes to mine. Dost know me now?
Thou'rt free! thou'rt free! Ah, surely a bird can smile!
Dost know me, Petrel? Dost remember how
I fed thee in the wake for many a mile,
Whilst thou wouldst pat the waves, then, rising, take
The morsel up and wheel about the wake?
Thou'rt free, thou'rt free, but for thine own dear sake
I keep thee caged awhile.

Away to sea! no matter where the coast:
The road that turns for home turns never wrong:
Where waves run high my bird will not be lost:
His home I know: 'tis where the winds are strong—
Where, on a throne of billows, rolling hoary
And green and blue and splashed with sunny glory,
Far, far from shore—from farthest promontory—
Prophetic Nature bares the secret of the story
That holds the spheres in song!

II.—WASSAIL CHORUS AT THE MERMAID
TAVERN.

THEODORE WATTS-DUNTON.

Chorus.

CHRISTMAS knows a merry, merry place,
Where he goes with fondest face,
Brightest eye, brightest hair :
Tell the Mermaid where is that one place :
Where ?

Raleigh.

'Tis by Devon's glorious halls,
Whence, dear Ben, I come again :
Bright of golden roofs and walls—
El Dorado's rare domain—
Seem those halls when sunlight launches
Shafts of gold through leafless branches,
Where the winter's feathery mantle blanches
Field and farm and lane.

Chorus.

Christmas knows a merry, merry place,
Where he goes with fondest face,
Brightest eye, brightest hair :
Tell the Mermaid where is that one place :
Where ?

Drayton.

'Tis where Avon's wood-sprites weave
Through the boughs a lace of rime.
While the bells of Christmas-eve
Fling for Will the Stratford-chime
O'er the river-flags embossed
Rich with flowery runes of frost—
O'er the meads where snowy tufts are tossed—
Strains of olden time.

Chorus.

Christmas knows a merry, merry place,
Where he goes with fondest face,
Brightest eye, brightest hair :
Tell the Mermaid where is that one place :
Where ?

Shakespeare's Friend.

'Tis, methinks, on any ground
Where our Shakespeare's feet are set.
There smiles Christmas, holly-crowned
With his blithest coronet :
Friendship's face he loveth well :
'Tis a countenance whose spell
Sheds a balm o'er every mead and dell
Where we used to fret.

Chorus.

Christmas knows a merry, merry place,
Where he goes with fondest face,
Brightest eye, brightest hair :
Tell the Mermaid where is that one place :
Where ?

Heywood.

More than all the pictures, Ben,
Winter weaves by wood or stream,
Christmas loves our London, when
Rise thy clouds of wassail-steam—
Clouds like these, that, curling, take
Forms of faces gone, and wake
Many a lay from lips we loved, and make
London like a dream.

Chorus.

Christmas knows a merry, merry place,
Where he goes with fondest face,
Brightest eye, brightest hair :
Tell the Mermaid where is that one place :
Where ?

Ben Jonson.

Love's old songs shall never die,
Yet the new shall suffer proof ;
Love's old drink of Yule brew I,
Wassail for new love's behoof :
Drink the drink I brew, and sing
Till the berried branches swing,
Till our song make all the Mermaid ring—
Yea, from rush to roof.

Finale.

Christmas loves this merry, merry place :—
Christmas saith with fondest face,
Brightest eye, brightest hair :
" Ben ! the drink tastes rare of sack and mace :
Rare ! "

III.—THE DUKKERIPEN: A DRAMATIC ROUNDELAY.

THEODORE WATTS-DUNTON.

"When the Golden Hand shines out o' the clouds over
two lovers it means good luck."—*Shuri Lovell*.

I.

Percy.

DO you forget that day on Rington strand
When, near the crumbling ruin's parapet,
I saw you stand beside the long-shore net
The gorgios spread to dry on sun-lit sand?

Rhona.

Do I forget?

Percy.

You wove the wood-flowers like a dewy band
Around your hair which shone as black as jet:
No fairy's crown of bloom was ever set
Round brows so sweet as those the wood-flowers
spanned.

I see that picture now; hair dewy-wet:
Dark eyes that pictures in the sky expand:
Love-lips (with one tattoo "for dukkerin") tanned
By sunny winds that kiss them as you stand.

Rhona.

Do I forget?

II.

Rhona.

The Golden Hand shone there : it's *you* forget,
Or p'raps us Romanies ondy understand
The way the Lovers' Dukkeripen is planned
Which shone that second time when us two met.

Percy.

Blest "Golden Hand" !

Rhona.

The wind, that mixed the smell o' violet
Wi' chirp o' bird, a-blowin' from the land
Where my dear mammy lies, said, as it fanned
My heart-like, "Them 'ere tears makes mammy fret."
She loves to see her chavi lookin' grand,
So I made what you call'd a coronet,
And in the front I put her amulet :
She sent the Hand to show she sees me yet.

Percy.

Blest "Golden Hand" !

SONNETS.

(FROM "THE COMING OF LOVE.")

THEODORE WATTS-DUNTON.

I.—*NATURA MALIGNA.*

THE Lady of the Hills with crimes untold
Followed my feet with azure eyes of prey ;
By glacier-brink she stood,—by cataract-spray—
When mists were dire, or avalanche-echoes rolled.
At night she glimmered in the death-wind cold,
And if a foot-print shone at break of day,
My flesh would quail, but straight my soul would say :
"'Tis hers whose hand God's mightier hand doth hold."
I trod her snow-bridge, for the moon was bright,
Her icicle-arch across the sheer crevasse,
When lo, she stood ! . . . God made her let me pass,
Then felled the bridge ! . . . Oh, there in sallow light,
There down the chasm, I saw her, cruel, white,
And all my wondrous days as in a glass.

II.—*NATURA BENIGNA.*

WHAT power is this ? what witchery wins my feet
To peaks so sheer they scorn the cloaking snow,
All silent as the emerald gulfs below,
Down whose ice-walls the wings of twilight beat ?
What thrill of earth and heaven—most wild, most sweet—
What answering pulse that all the senses know,
Comes leaping from the ruddy eastern glow
Where, far away, the skies and mountains meet ?
Mother, 'tis I reborn : I know thee well :
That throb I know and all its prophecies,
O Mother and Queen, beneath the olden spell
Of silence, gazing from thy hills and skies !
Dumb Mother, struggling with the years to tell
The secret at thy heart through helpless eyes.

III.—A STARRY NIGHT AT SEA.

IF heaven's bright halls are very far from sea,
 I dread a pang the angels could not 'suage:—
 The imprison'd seabird knows, and only he,
 How drear, how dark, may be the proudest cage.
 Outside the bars he sees a prison still:
 The self-same wood or mead, or silver stream
 That lends the captive lark a joyous thrill
 Is landscape in the seabird's prison-dream.
 So might I pine on yonder starry floor
 For sea-wind, deaf to all the singing spheres;
 Billows like these, that never knew a shore,
 Might mock mine eyes and tease my hungry ears;
 No scent of amaranth, moly, or asphodel,
 In lands that bloom above yon glittering vault,
 Could soothe me if I lost this briny smell,
 This living breath of Ocean, sharp and salt.

IV.—THE FIRST KISS.

IF only in dreams may Man be fully blest,
 Is heaven a dream? Is she I claspt a dream?
 Or stood she here even now where dew-drops gleam
 And miles of furze shine yellow down the West?
 I seem to clasp her still—still on my breast
 Her bosom beats: I see the blue eyes beam.
 I think she kiss'd these lips, for now they seem
 Scarce mine: so hallow'd of the lips they press'd.
 Yon thicket's breath—can that be eglantine?
 Those birds—can they be Morning's choristers?
 Can this be Earth? Can these be banks of furze?—
 Like burning bushes fired of God they shine!
 I seem to know them, though this body of mine
 Pass'd into spirit at the touch of hers!

V.—THE HEAVEN THAT WAS.

(A SLEEPLESS NIGHT IN VENICE.)

WHEN hope lies dead—ah, when 'tis death to live,
And wrongs remembered make the heart still bleed,
Better are Sleep's kind lies for Life's blind need
Than truth, if lies a little peace can give.
A little peace! 'tis thy prerogative,
O Sleep! to lend it; thine to quell or feed
This love that starves—this starving soul's long greed,
And bid Regret, the queen of hell, forgive.
Yon moon that mocks me thro' the uncurtained glass
Recalls that other night, that other moon,—
Two English lovers on a grey lagoon,—
The voices from the lantern'd gondolas,
The kiss, the breath, the flashing eyes, and, soon,
The throbbing stillness: all the heaven that was.

VI.—A DREAM.

BENEATH the loveliest dream there coils a fear:
Last night came she whose eyes are memories now;
Her far-off gaze seemed all-forgetful how
Love dimmed them once, so calm they shone and clear.
"Sorrow," I said, "has made me old, my dear;
'Tis I, indeed, but grief can change the brow:
Beneath my load a seraph's neck might bow,
Vigils like mine would blanch an angel's hair."
Oh, then I saw, I saw the sweet lips move!
I saw the love-mists thickening in her eyes—
I heard a sound as if a murmuring dove
Felt lonely in the dells of Paradise;
But when upon my neck she fell, my love,
Her hair smelt sweet of whin and woodland spice.

VII.—JOHN THE PILGRIM.

A.D. 1249.

(THE MIRAGE.)

BENEATH the sand-storm John the Pilgrim prays ;
 But when he rises, lo ! an Eden smiles,
 Green leafy slopes, meadows of chamomiles,
 Claspt in a silvery river's winding maze :
 " Water, water ! Blessed be God ! " he says,
 And totters gasping toward those happy isles.
 Then all is fled ! Over the sandy piles
 The bald-eyed vultures come and stand at gaze.
 " God heard me not," says he, " blessed be God ! "
 And dies. But as he nears the pearly strand,
 Heav'n's outer coast where waiting angels stand,
 He looks below : " Farewell, thou hooded clod,
 Brown corpse the vultures tear on bloody sand :
 God heard my prayer for life—blessed be God ! "

VIII.—DICKENS RETURNS ON CHRISTMAS DAY.

A ragged girl in Drury Lane was heard to exclaim : " Dickens dead ? Then will Father Christmas die too ? "—*June 9, 1870.*

" DICKENS is dead ! " Beneath that grievous cry
 London seemed shivering in the summer heat ;
 Strangers took up the tale like friends that meet :
 Dickens is dead ! said they, and hurried by ;
 Street children stopped their games—they knew not why,
 But some new night seemed darkening down the street.
 A girl in rags, staying her way-worn feet,
 Cried, " Dickens dead ? Will Father Christmas die ? "
 City he loved, take courage on thy way !
 He loves thee still, in all thy joys and fears.
 Though he whose smile made bright thine eyes of grey—
 Though he whose voice, uttering thy burthened years,
 Made laughter bubble through thy sea of tears—
 Is gone, Dickens returns on Christmas Day !

IX.—THE CHRISTMAS TREE.

LIFE still hath one romance that naught can bury—
Not Time himself, who coffins Life's romances—
For still will Christmas gild the year's mischances,
If Childhood comes, as here, to make him merry—
To kiss with lips more ruddy than the cherry—
To smile with eyes outshining by their glances
The Christmas tree—to dance with fairy dances
And crown his hoary brow with leaf and berry.

And as to us, dear friend, the carols sung
Are fresh as ever. Bright is yonder bough
Of mistletoe as that which shone and swung
When you and I and Friendship made a vow
That Childhood's Christmas still should seal each brow—
Friendship's, and yours, and mine—and keep us young.

X.—COLERIDGE.

I SEE thee pine like her in golden story
Who, in her prison, woke and saw, one day,
The gates thrown open—saw the sunbeams play,
With only a web 'tween her and summer's glory;
Who, when that web—so frail, so transitory,
It broke before her breath—had fallen away,
Saw other webs and others rise for aye
Which kept her prisoned till her hair was hoary.

Those songs half-sung that yet were all divine—
That woke Romance, the queen, to reign afresh—
Had been but preludes from that lyre of thine,
Could thy rare spirit's wings have pierced the mesh
Spun by the wizard who compels the flesh,
But lets the poet see how heav'n can shine.

XI., XII., XIII.—THE LAST WALTZ.

I.

HAS she forgotten for such halls as these
The domes the angels built in holy times,
When wings were ours in childhood's flowery climes,
To dance with butterflies and golden bees?—
Forgotten how the sunny-fingered breeze
Shook out those English harebells' magic chimes
On that child wedding morn, 'neath English limes,
Mid wild-flowers tall enough to kiss her knees?
The love that childhood cradled—girlhood nursed—
Has she forgotten it for this dull play,
Where far-off pigmies seem to waltz and sway
Like dancers in a telescope reversed?
Or does not pallid Conscience come and say,
"Who sells her glory of beauty stands accursed?"

II.

But was it *this* that bought her—this poor splendour
That won her from her troth and wild-flower wreath
Who "cracked the fox-glove bells" on Grayland Heath,
Or played with playful winds that tried to bend her,
Or, tripping through the deer-park, tall and slender,
Answered the larks above, the crakes beneath,
Or mocked, with glitter of laughing lips and teeth,
When Love grew grave—to hide her soul's surrender?
Her soul's surrender! Well—yon future spouse
Paid nothing for the soul! He bought, as rake,
"A woman's points:" kisses these lips that shake
The heart with wonder when they seal their vows—
These eyes where hues of sky and ocean take
All shapes of love—these brows!—my darling's brows!

III.

The body knows me as I touch her waist—
 The fingers throbbing through the little glove—
 The fingers trembling at my arm above—
 The breast whose pearls are heaving interlaced :
 All know these arms of mine that once embraced.
 Though I could give no palace—only love—
 That gift which "only a child had dared approve"—
 The soul's sweet temple holds me uneffaced :
 The body feels me "crack" those foxglove bells
 In this soft hand to "make the elfin thunder":
 In these pink ears I think the music swells
 To Fate's world-waltz that holds the stars asunder :
 But 'tis the soul has learnt what Mammon sells :
 As here we spin, what are its thoughts? I wonder !

XIV., XV., XVI.—TWO LETTERS.

(TO A FRIEND.)

I.

THE PROPHECIC LIGHT.

BRIGHT-BROWED as Summer's self who claspt the land,
 With eyes like English skies, where seemed to play
 Deep azure dreams behind the tender grey,
 All light and love, she moved : I see her stand
 Beneath that tree ; I see the happy band
 Of bridesmaids on the lawn where blossoms sway
 In light so rare, it seems as if the day
 Glowed conscious of the future's rosy strand.
 O Friend, if sun and wind and flowers and birds,
 In language deeper drawn than human words
 From deeper founts than Time shall e'er destroy,
 All spoke to thee in Summer's rich caress,
 Even so my heart, though wordless too, could bless :
 It could but feel a joy to know thy joy.

II.

DEATH'S MOCKERY.

WHEN death from out the dark, by one blind blow,
Strikes down Love's heart of hearts—severs a life—
Cleaves it in twain as by a sudden knife,
Leaving the dreadful Present, dumb with woe,
Mocked by a Past, whose rainbow-skies aglow
O'er-arch Love's bowers, where all his flowers seem rife
In bloom of one sweet loving girl and wife—
Then Friendship's voice must whisper, whisper low.

Though well I know 'tis thou who dost inherit
Heroic blood and faith that lends the spirit
Strength known to souls like thine, of noblest strain,
Comfort I dare not proffer. What relief
Shall Friendship proffer Love in such wild grief?
I can but suffer pain to know thy pain:

I can but suffer pain; and yet to me
Returns that day whose light seemed heavenly light,
Whose breath seemed incense rising to unite
That lawn—where every flower and bird and bee
Seemed loving her who shone beneath that tree—
With lawns far off, whose flowers of higher delight,
Beyond Death's icy peaks and fens of night,
Bloomed 'neath a heaven her eyes, not ours, could see.

Brother, did Nature mock us with that glory
Which seemed to prophesy Love's rounded story?
Or was it that sweet Summer's fond device
To show thee who shall stand on Eden slopes,
Where bloom the broken buds of earthly hopes—
Stand waiting 'neath a tree of Paradise?

OTHER SONNETS.

I.—THE SHADOW ON THE WINDOW BLIND.

WITHIN this thicket's every leafy lair
 A songbird sleeps : the very rooks are dumb,
 Though red behind their nests the moon has swum—
 But still I see that shadow writing there!—
 Poet, behind yon casement's ruddy square,
 Whose shadow tells me why you do not come—
 Rhyming and chiming of thine insect-hum,
 Flying and singing through thine inch of air—
 Come thither, where on grass and flower and leaf
 Gleams Nature's scripture putting Man's to shame :
 "Thy day," she says, "is all too rich and brief—
 Thy game of life too wonderful a game—
 To give to Art entirely or in chief :
 Drink of these dews—sweeter than wine of Fame.

II.—AUSTRALIA'S MOTHER.

"England stands alone : without an ally."
 —*A German Newspaper.*

SHE stands alone : ally nor friend has she,"
 Saith Europe of our England—her who bore
 Drake, Blake, and Nelson—Warrior-Queen who wore
 Light's conquering glaive that strikes the conquered free.
 Alone!—From Canada comes o'er the sea,
 And from that English coast with coral shore,
 The old-world cry Europe hath heard of yore
 From Dover cliffs : "Ready, aye ready we!"
 "Europe," saith England, "hath forgot my boys!—
 Forgot how tall, in yonder golden zone
 'Neath Austral skies, my youngest born have grown
 (Bearers of bayonets now and swords for toys)—
 Forgot 'mid boltless thunder—harmless noise—
 The sons with whom old England 'stands alone'!"

Algernon Charles Swinburne.

1837.

MR. SWINBURNE was born in London, April 5th, 1837. His father, Admiral Charles Henry Swinburne, came of an old Northumbrian stock; his mother was Lady Jane Henrietta, daughter of George, third Earl of Ashburnham. In 1857, after five years spent at Eton, he entered as a commoner at Balliol College, Oxford, where he contributed to the short-lived "Undergraduate Papers," issued at the end of that year and the beginning of the next under the editorship of Mr. John Nichol. Mr. Swinburne left Oxford in 1860, without taking a degree. Since then he has lived mainly in or near London; for many years past, under the same roof with Mr. Watts-Dunton. Since the year 1860 he has published nearly thirty volumes of verse and prose.

Mr. Swinburne's first volume, "The Queen-Mother and Rosamond" (1860), has never had justice done to its really remarkable qualities. At the time it seems to have passed unnoticed, yet here, already, in "The Queen-Mother," was a poet of twenty-three who could handle a dramatic subject finely, and had certainly a most original and accomplished mastery of blank verse. The style, indeed, is somewhat cramped, and there is a certain stiffness—an archaic, quaint formality, rather—about the versification. Language and cadence are both studied with astonishing closeness from Shakespeare,

whose direct influence is more visible here than anywhere else in Mr. Swinburne's works. Take this, speech, for instance, of Catherine de' Medici before the massacre of St. Bartholomew.

"I would fain see rain.

Art thou so slow of purpose, thou great God,
The keenest of thy sighted ministers
Can catch no knowledge what we do? for else
Surely the wind would be as a hard fire,
And the sea's yellow and distempered foam
Displease the happy heaven; wash corn with sand
To waste the mixture; mar the trees of growth,
Choke birds with salt, breach walls with tided brine,
And chase with heavy water the horned brood
Past use of limit; towers and popular streets
Should in the middle green smother and drown,
And havoc die with fulness.—I should be mad,
I talk as one filled through with wine; thou, God,
Whose thunder is confusion of the hills
And with wrath sown abolishes the fields,
I pray thee if thy hand would ruin us,
Make witness of it even this night that is
The last for many cradles, and the grave
Of many reverend seats; even at this turn,
This edge of season, this keen joint of time,
Finish and spare not."

After five years' silence, Mr. Swinburne published "*Atalanta in Calydon*" (1865), and found himself famous. The critics unanimously voted him "a place among the great poets of his country;" he was contrasted with Keats and compared with Shelley; it was proclaimed that "a scholar and a poet has come amongst us." And indeed there never was, perhaps, a more brilliant outset on a poetic career. In the solemn opening—

"Maiden, and mistress of the months and stars
Now folded in the flowerless fields of heaven"—

there was the note of a new kind of blank verse, which had the classical dignity with a romantic exuberance of sound and colour. In that wonderful first chorus—

“When the hounds of spring are on winter’s traces,
The mother of months in meadow or plain
Fills the shadows and windy places
With lisp of leaves and ripple of rain”—

there was equally the note of a new kind of lyric verse, more bounding and fleet-footed than even the most dancing measures of Shelley. The form of the play was Greek, and yet not Greek; its tragic and desperate fatalism was perhaps rather Asiatic than Greek. “*Erechtheus*,” published in 1876, is really Greek, in spirit as in form—more intimately Greek than any attempt ever made to reproduce the effect of a classical drama in English. But, as a poem, as an original achievement, even that strong and splendid drama has scarcely the fascination, certainly not the “first fine careless rapture” of the earlier work. In the same year with “*Atalanta*” appeared a drama of quite another kind, “*Chastelard*,” the first part of the Queen Mary trilogy, to be followed by “*Bothwell*” in 1874, “*Mary Stuart*” in 1881. “*Chastelard*” displeased many of the critics who had praised “*Atalanta*,” but who could not tolerate a “fair fearful Venus made of deadly foam,” nor endure to read of her

“Splendid supple body and mouth on fire,
And Paphian breath that bites the lips with heat.”

Less obviously mature than the faultless Greek tragedy, the morbid, intense, troubled modern tragedy of complex passion, full of sensual heat and of a singular kind of cruelty, is yet one of

Mr. Swinburne's most interesting and characteristic works. Really written before "*Atalanta*," the blank verse is more akin to the blank verse of "*The Queen-Mother*," but it has a special sort of passionate voluptuous languor, peculiar to itself. The character of Mary may or may not be historical, but it is certainly a most subtle rendering of a subtle type of woman. Here for the first time we see that union of the French and Scandinavian elements in Mr. Swinburne's genius. The play has its philosophy,—the youthful creed of "happy days or else to die,"—and it gives form and action to just that as no one had ever done before. It is the voice of the flesh, and that, certainly, has its place in poetry. So Mr. Swinburne thought, for next year, in 1866, came the "*Poems and Ballads*." They raised a storm, and founded a school.

The fascination of Mr. Swinburne's early poetry was at one moment almost as supreme as the fascination which had been exercised by the poetry of Byron. The appeal of both poets is to youth—to fiery poetical youth. Byron expressed the passions of his own soul, and sang the revolt of his generation. To the youth of his time he was the lyric Apollo. After him came Tennyson, the poet mainly of gracious order, with a somewhat feminine seductiveness, which won its way, but without storm. Then a new voice was heard, and a voice of rebellion. Mr. Swinburne's poetry was a centre of revolt; it expressed the turbulence of another generation. Not entirely original, in the "*Poems and Ballads*," it was a new influence, it was significant, even when it followed Baudelaire in subject, Rossetti in manner. Indeed, a part of its force lay in the

very fact that it gave voice to tendencies then in the air. That wonderful volume of "Poems and Ballads"—so immature in its over-ripeness—was the product, and the product, for some time, most in evidence of that whole movement in art and poetry which has given us the pictures of the pre-Raphaelites and the poetry of Rossetti and his circle. Some of the pieces are very young, and they have, let us admit, certain obvious faults of taste. But they gave evidence of such an astonishing lyric genius that nothing seemed too great to prophecy on behalf of so young and, already, so finished a writer. Mr. Swinburne has learnt, since then, many things, he has done yet more astonishing poetical feats, he has written, at all events in the "Songs before Sunrise," poems which are, in the deepest sense, more poetical than anything in the "Poems and Ballads"; yet that early volume, with its abounding promise, remains a great achievement even more than the prelude to achievements. In 1867 "A Song of Italy" appeared, followed by "William Blake, a Critical Essay," which commenced the remarkable series of prose studies which Mr. Swinburne has contributed to the literature of his time. By 1871, the period of the "Songs before Sunrise," Mr. Swinburne had passed beyond the influence of Rossetti and the French poets of intricate passion and curious form, and had given himself heart and soul to Mazzini and the idea of liberty. That phase of enthusiasm—enthusiasm for something outside literature, close to the springs of life—produced the most lofty, the most passionately lyrical verse that Mr. Swinburne has ever written; verse, too, in the best poems—such as "Super

Flumina Babylonis” and “*The Pilgrims*”—more restrained, more lucid, more virile, than perhaps anything in his work. The same volume contains also the most furious language that even Mr. Swinburne has ever used. It is directed chiefly against God, priests, and kings. The amorous extravagance of the “*Poems and Ballads*”—the determination of a great word-artist to revel in verbal sensuality—has passed into another kind of extravagance, political and religious, in which one sees the word-artist revelling in the delight of literary blasphemy. This period also passed, and, after “*Erechtheus*,” a Greek tragedy (1876), and a second volume of “*Poems and Ballads*” (1878), full of splendid things, “looking before and after,” the gradually increasing influence of Victor Hugo became more and more absorbing, and the drama had become more and more attractive. “*Bothwell*”—the longest play, one may reasonably hope, in existence—had appeared in 1874. It is full of magnificent poetry, and contains, in the last scene between Mary and Darnley, the most really dramatic of Mr. Swinburne’s work. But a play in which one speech covers fourteen pages is too formidable for any but the most enthusiastic students of the drama. The trilogy was completed in 1881 by “*Mary Stuart*,” and was followed by “*Tristram of Lyonesse*,” a poem in nine cantos with a prelude. Since then Mr. Swinburne has easily beaten Byron in “*Marino Faliero*” (1885), and an anonymous Elizabethan in “*Locrine*” (1887). His later lyric work is more varied than ever in form, more restricted than before in subject. From the time of “*Songs of the Springtide*” (1880), he has

devoted himself mainly to the celebration of the sea, of Victor Hugo, and of children. His technique has become more and more wonderful; he attacks more and more sustained and intricate cadenzas with the security of a voice that has never failed; he writes ballads in lines of twenty syllables, and publishes a whole volume of delicate little lyrics in a form of his own invention, or modification, the roundel.

Mr. Swinburne's prose must not be forgotten, for it is emphatically the prose of a poet. It has the same qualities and the same defects as his verse, and is an even greater spendthrift of words. Here, as in his poetry, he sows, not with the hand, but with the whole sack. Often splendidly eloquent—especially in that “noble pleasure of praising” which he tells us has attracted him to the profession of criticism—Mr. Swinburne's critical work has a fundamental sanity, an absolute vision, which his preference for superlatives has permitted him somewhat to obscure. Like all critics, he has his prejudices; like all critics who are also poets, he seems often to over-rate what he praises; but he has never, like all critics who are not also poets, praised bad work, and he has rarely failed to recognize work that was good. For so voluminous a writer of verse he has done an astonishing amount of prose—studies of Shakespeare, of the Elizabethan dramatists, of Blake, of Victor Hugo, and others; and had he never written a line of poetry he might have won a reputation as the most profound literary scholar of the day.

Probably no poet ever had so many natural advantages given him for his distraction. Mr. Swinburne

has never known the bracing discipline of a difficulty. His mastery over poetical form, his command of poetical language, his lyrical impulse, are simply unparalleled. Just as the orchestration of Berlioz makes that of every other composer seem, for the time at least, tame and inefficient, so the poetical orchestration of Mr. Swinburne makes the verse of Shelley seem but cold and halting, the verse of Tennyson but thin and formal. It has a conquering force, and overpowers the judgment. Only on a second reading does one pause to consider whether there is too much of certain qualities—melody preferred to harmony, harmony in the place of thought. Mr. Swinburne sings so naturally that he has sometimes given us only the notes of the music. He must sing at all costs. When he meets with an adequate subject, the result is admirable—somewhat less so when his subject is inadequate or non-existent. This is not so much his own fault as the fault of Nature, who created him in a fit of extravagance. If Mr. Swinburne had only had half as much difficulty in writing poetry as the most fluent of his predecessors, he would have written considerably less, but some of his work would have been much better.

ARTHUR SYMONS.

ATALANTA IN CALYDON.

1865.

ALGERNON CHARLES SWINBURNE.

I.

CHORUS: WHEN THE HOUNDS OF SPRING.

✓ WHEN the hounds of spring are on winter's traces,
The mother of months in meadow or plain
Fills the shadows and windy places
With lisp of leaves and ripple of rain ;
And the brown bright nightingale amorous
Is half assuaged for Itylus,
For the Thracian ships and the foreign faces,
The tongueless vigil, and all the pain.

✓ Come with bows bent and with emptying of quivers,
Maiden most perfect, lady of light,
With a noise of winds and many rivers,
With a clamour of waters, and with might ;
Bind on thy sandals, O thou most fleet,
Over the splendour and speed of thy feet ;
For the faint east quickens, the wan west shivers,
Round the feet of the day and the feet of the night.
Where shall we find her, how shall we sing to her,
Fold our hands round her knees, and cling ?
O that man's heart were as fire and could spring to her,
Fire, or the strength of the streams that spring !
For the stars and the winds are unto her
As raiment, as songs of the harp player ;
For the risen stars and the fallen cling to her,
And the southwest-wind and the west-wind sing.

✓ For winter's rains and ruins are over,
And all the season of snows and sins ;
The days dividing lover and lover,
The light that loses, the night that wins ;
And time remembered is grief forgotten,
And frosts are slain and flowers begotten,
And in green underwood and cover
Blossom by blossom the spring begins.

The full streams feed on flower of rushes,
Ripe grasses trammel a travelling foot,
The faint fresh flame of the young year flushes
From leaf to flower and flower to fruit ;
And fruit and leaf are as gold and fire,
And the oat is heard above the lyre,
And the hoofed heel of a satyr crushes
The chestnut-husk at the chestnut root.

✓ And Pan by noon and Bacchus by night,
Fleeter of foot than the fleet-foot kid,
Follows with dancing and fills with delight
The Mænad and the Bassarid ;
And soft as lips that laugh and hide,
The laughing leaves of the trees divide,
And screen from seeing and leave in sight
The god pursuing, the maiden hid.

The ivy falls with the Bacchanal's hair
Over her eyebrows hiding her eyes ;
The wild vine slipping down leaves bare
Her bright breast shortening into sighs ;
The wild vine slips with the weight of its leaves,
But the berried ivy catches and cleaves
To the limbs that glitter, the feet that scare
The wolf that follows, the fawn that flies.

II.

CHORUS: BEFORE THE BEGINNING OF YEARS.

BEFORE the beginning of years
 There came to the making of man
 Time, with a gift of tears ;
 Grief, with a glass that ran ;
 Pleasure, with pain for leaven ;
 Summer, with flowers that fell ;
 Remembrance fallen from heaven,
 And madness risen from hell ;
 Strength without hands to smite ;
 Love that endures for a breath ;
 Night, the shadow of light,
 And life, the shadow of death.

And the high gods took in hand
 Fire, and the falling of tears,
 And a measure of sliding sand
 From under the feet of the years ;
 And froth and drift of the sea ;
 And dust of the labouring earth ;
 And bodies of things to be
 In the houses of death and of birth ;
 And wrought with weeping and laughter,
 And fashioned with loathing and love ,
 With life before and after
 And death beneath and above,
 For a day and a night and a morrow,
 That his strength might endure for a span
 With travail and heavy sorrow,
 The holy spirit of man.

From the winds of the north and the south
They gathered as unto strife ;
They breathed upon his mouth,
They filled his body with life ;
Eyesight and speech they wrought
For the veils of the soul therein,
A time for labour and thought,
A time to serve and to sin ;
They gave him light in his ways,
And love, and a space for delight,
And beauty and length of days,
And night, and sleep in the night,
His speech is a burning fire ;
With his lips he travaileth ;
In his heart is a blind desire,
In his eyes foreknowledge of death ;
He weaves, and is clothed with derision ;
Sows, and he shall not reap ;
His life is a watch or a vision
Between a sleep and a sleep.

POEMS AND BALLADS.

1866.

ALGERNON CHARLES SWINBURNE.

I.—HYMN TO PROSERPINE.

(AFTER THE PROCLAMATION IN ROME OF THE CHRISTIAN
FAITH).

Vicisti, Galilæe.

I HAVE lived long enough, having seen one thing,
that love hath an end ;
Goddess and maiden and queen, be near me now
and befriend.
Thou art more than the day or the morrow, the
seasons that laugh or that weep ;
For these give joy and sorrow ; but thou, Proserpina,
sleep.
Sweet is the treading of wine, and sweet the feet of
the dove ;
But a goodlier gift is thine than foam of the grapes
or love.
Yea, is not even Apollo, with hair and harpstring of
gold,
A bitter God to follow, a beautiful God to behold ?
I am sick of singing : the bays burn deep and chafe :
I am fain
To rest a little from praise and grievous pleasure and
pain.
For the Gods we know not of, who give us our daily
breath,
We know they are cruel as love or life, and lovely
as death.

O Gods dethroned and deceased, cast forth, wiped
out in a day !

From your wrath is the world released, redeemed
from your chains, men say.

New Gods are crowned in the city ; their flowers
have broken your rods ;

They are merciful, clothed with pity, the young com-
passionate Gods.

But for me their new device is barren, the days are
bare ;

Things long past over suffice, and men forgotten
that were.

Time and the Gods are at strife ; ye dwell in the
midst thereof,

Draining a little life from the barren breasts of love.

I say to you, cease, take rest : yea, I say to you all,
be at peace,

Till the bitter milk of her breast and the barren
bosom shall cease.

Wilt thou yet take all, Galilean ? but these thou shalt
not take,

The laurel, the palms and the pæan, the breasts of
the nymphs in the brake ;

Breasts more soft than a dove's, that tremble with
tenderer breath ;

And all the wings of the Loves, and all the joy before
death ;

All the feet of the hours that sound as a single lyre,
Dropped and deep in the flowers, with strings that
flicker like fire.

More than these wilt thou give, things fairer than all
these things ?

Nay, for a little we live, and life hath mutable wings.
A little while and we die ; shall life not thrive as it may ?

For no man under the sky lives twice, outliving his day.

And grief is a grievous thing, and a man hath enough of his tears :

Why should he labour, and bring fresh grief to blacken his years ?

Thou hast conquered, O pale Galilean; the world has grown grey from thy breath,

We have drunken of things Lethean, and fed on the fulness of death.

Laurel is green for a season, and love is sweet for a day ;

But love grows bitter with treason, and laurel outlives not May.

Sleep, shall we sleep after all ? for the world is not sweet in the end ;

For the old faiths loosen and fall, the new years ruin and rend.

Fate is a sea without shore, and the soul is a rock that abides ;

But her ears are vexed with the roar and her face with the foam of the tides.

O lips that the live blood faints in, the leavings of racks and rods !

O ghastly glories of saints, dead limbs of gibbeted Gods !

Though all men abase them before you in spirit, and all knees bend,

I kneel not, neither adore you, but standing, look to the end.

All delicate days and pleasant, all spirits and sorrows are cast

Far out with the foam of the present that sweeps to the surf of the past :

Where beyond the extreme sea-wall, and between
the remote sea-gates,
Waste water washes, and tall ships founder, and
deep death waits :
Where, mighty with deepening sides, clad about with
the seas as with wings,
And impelled of invisible tides, and fulfilled of un-
speakable things,
White-eyed and poisonous-finned, shark-toothed
and serpentine-curved,
Rolls, under the whitening wind of the future, the
wave of the world.
The depths stand naked in sunder behind it, the
storms flee away ;
In the hollow before it the thunder is taken and
snared as a prey ;
In its sides is the north-wind bound ; and its salt is
of all men's tears ;
With light of ruin, and sound of changes, and pulse
of years :
With travail of day after day, and with trouble of
hour upon hour ;
And bitter as blood is the spray ; and the crests are
as fangs that devour :
And its vapour and storm of its steam as the sighing
of spirits to be ;
And its noise as the noise in a dream ; and its depth
as the roots of the sea :
And the height of its heads as the height of the
utmost stars of the air :
And the ends of the earth at the might thereof
tremble, and time is made bare.
Will ye bridle the deep sea with reins, will ye
chasten the high sea with rods ?

Will ye take her to chain her with chains, who is
older than all ye Gods ?
All ye as a wind shall go by, as a fire shall ye pass
and be past ;
Ye are Gods, and behold, ye shall die, and the waves
be upon you at last.
In the darkness of time, in the deeps of the years,
in the changes of things,
Ye shall sleep as a slain man sleeps, and the world
shall forget you for kings.
Though the feet of thine high priests tread where thy
lords and our forefathers trod,
Though these that were Gods are dead, and thou
being dead art a God,
Though before thee the throned Cytherean be fallen,
and hidden her head,
Yet thy kingdom shall pass, Galilean, thy dead shall
go down to thee dead.
Of the maiden thy mother men sing as a goddess
with grace clad around ;
Thou art throned where another was king ; where
another was queen she is crowned.
Yea, once we had sight of another : but now she is
queen, say these.
Not as thine, not as thine was our mother, a blossom
of flowering seas,
Clothed round with the world's desire as with
raiment, and fair as the foam,
And fleetier than kindled fire, and a goddess, and
mother of Rome.
For thine came pale and a maiden, and sister to
sorrow ; but ours,
Her deep hair heavily laden with odour and colour
of flowers,

White rose of the rose-white water, a silver splendour, a flame,
Bent down unto us that besought her, and earth grew sweet with her name.
For thine came weeping, a slave among slaves, and rejected ; but she
Came flushed from the full-flushed wave, and imperial, her foot on the sea.
And the wonderful waters knew her, the winds and the viewless ways,
And the roses grew rosier, and bluer the sea-blue stream of the bays.
Ye are fallen, our lords, by what token ? we wist that ye should not fall.
Ye were all so fair that are broken ; and one more fair than ye all.
But I turn to her still, having seen she shall surely abide in the end ;
Goddess and maiden and queen, be near me now and befriend.
O daughter of earth, of my mother, her crown and blossom of birth,
I am also, I also, thy brother ; I go as I came unto earth.
In the night where thine eyes are as moons are in heaven, the night where thou art,
Where the silence is more than all tunes, where sleep overflows from the heart,
Where the poppies are sweet as the rose in our world, and the red rose is white,
And the wind falls faint as it blows with the fume of the flowers of the night,
And the murmur of spirits that sleep in the shadow of Gods from afar

Grows dim in thine ears and deep as the deep dim
soul of a star,
In the sweet low light of thy face, under heavens
untrod by the sun,
Let my soul with their souls find place; and forget
what is done and undone.
Thou art more than the Gods who number the days
of our temporal breath ;
For these give labour and slumber : but thou, Pro-
serpina, death.
Therefore now at thy feet I abide for a season in
silence. I know
I shall die as my fathers died, and sleep as they
sleep ; even so.
For the glass of the years is brittle wherein we gaze
for a span ;
A little soul for a little bears up this corpse which is
man.*
So long I endure, no longer ; and laugh not again,
neither weep.
For there is no God found stronger than death ;
and death is a sleep.

* *φυχάριον εἰ βαστάζον νεκρὸν.*—EPICTETUS.

II.—ITYLUS.

SWALLOW, my sister, O sister swallow,
How can thine heart be full of the spring ?
A thousand summers are over and dead.
What hast thou found in the spring to follow ?
What hast thou found in thine heart to sing ?
What wilt thou do when the summer is shed ?

O swallow, sister, O fair swift swallow,
Why wilt thou fly after spring to the south,
The soft south whither thine heart is set ?
Shall not the grief of the old time follow ?
Shall not the song thereof cleave to thy mouth ?
Hast thou forgotten ere I forget ?

Sister, my sister, O fleet sweet swallow,
Thy way is long to the sun and the south ;
But I, fulfilled of my heart's desire,
Shedding my song upon height, upon hollow,
From tawny body and sweet small mouth
Feed the heart of the night with fire.

I the nightingale all spring through,
O swallow, sister, O changing swallow,
All spring through till the spring be done,
Clothed with the light of the night on the dew,
Sing, while the hours and the wild birds follow,
Take flight and follow and find the sun.

Sister, my sister, O soft light swallow,
Though all things feast in the spring's guest-chamber,
How hast thou heart to be glad thereof yet ?
For where thou fliest I shall not follow,
Till life forget and death remember,
Till thou remember and I forget.

Swallow, my sister, O singing swallow,
I know not how thou hast heart to sing.
Hast thou the heart ? is it all past over ?
Thy lord the summer is good to follow,
And fair the feet of thy lover the spring :
But what wilt thou say to the spring thy lover ?

O swallow, sister, O fleeting swallow,
My heart in me is a molten ember
And over my head the waves have met.
But thou wouldst tarry or I would follow
Could I forget or thou remember,
Couldst thou remember and I forget.

O sweet stray sister, O shifting swallow,
The heart's division divideth us.
Thy heart is light as a leaf of a tree ;
But mine goes forth among sea-gulfs hollow
To the place of the slaying of Itylus,
The feast of Daulis, the Thracian sea.

O swallow, sister, O rapid swallow,
I pray thee sing not a little space.
Are not the roofs and the lintels wet ?
The woven web that was plain to follow,
The small slain body, the flower-like face,
Can I remember if thou forget ?

O sister, sister, thy first-begotten !
The hands that cling and the feet that follow,
The voice of the child's blood crying yet
Who hath remembered me ? who hath forgotten ?
Thou hast forgotten, O summer swallow,
But the world shall end when I forget.

III.—THE GARDEN OF PROSERPINE.

HERE, where the world is quiet ;
Here, where all trouble seems
Dead winds' and spent waves' riot

In doubtful dreams of dreams ;
I watch the green field growing
For reaping folk and sowing,
For harvest-time and mowing,
A sleepy world of streams.

I am tired of tears and laughter,
And men that laugh and weep ;
Of what may come hereafter
For men that sow to reap :

I am weary of days and hours,
Blown buds of barren flowers,
Desires and dreams and powers
And everything but sleep.

Here life has death for neighbour,
And far from eye or ear
Wan waves and wet winds labour,
Weak ships and spirits steer ;
They drive adrift, and whither
They wot not who make thither ;
But no such winds blow hither,
And no such things grow here.

No growth of moor or coppice,
No heather-flower or vine,
But bloomless buds of poppies,
Green grapes of Proserpine,
Pale beds of blowing rushes,
Where no leaf blooms or blushes
Save this whereout she crushes
For dead men deadly wine.

Pale, without name or number,
In fruitless fields of corn,
They bow themselves and slumber
All night till light is born ;
And like a soul belated,
In hell and heaven unmated,
By cloud and mist abated
Comes out of darkness morn.

Though one were strong as seven,
He too with death shall dwell,
Nor wake with wings in heaven,
Nor weep for pains in hell ;
Though one were fair as roses,
His beauty clouds and closes ;
And well though love reposes,
In the end it is not well.

Pale, beyond porch and portal,
Crowned with calm leaves, she stands
Who gathers all things mortal
With cold immortal hands ;
Her languid lips are sweeter
Than love's who fears to greet her
To men that mix and meet her
From many times and lands.

She waits for each and other,
She waits for all men born ;
Forgets the earth her mother,
The life of fruits and corn ;
And spring and seed and swallow
Take wing for her and follow
Where summer song rings hollow
And flowers are put to scorn.

There go the loves that wither,
The old loves with wearier wings ;
And all dead years draw thither,
And all disastrous things ;
Dead dreams of days forsaken,
Blind buds that snows have shaken,
Wild leaves that winds have taken,
Red strays of ruined springs.

We are not sure of sorrow,
And joy was never sure ;
To-day will die to-morrow ;
Time stoops to no man's lure ;
And love, grown faint and fretful,
With lips but half regretful
Sighs, and with eyes forgetful
Weeps that no loves endure.

From too much love of living,
From hope and fear set free,
We thank with brief thanksgiving
Whatever gods may be
That no life lives for ever ;
That dead men rise up never ;
That even the weariest river
Winds somewhere safe to sea.

Then star nor sun shall waken,
Nor any change of light :
Nor sound of waters shaken,
Nor any sound or sight :
Nor wintry leaves nor vernal,
Nor days nor things diurnal ;
Only the sleep eternal
In an eternal night.

SONGS BEFORE SUNRISE.

1870.

ALGERNON CHARLES SWINBURNE.

SUPER FLUMINA BABYLONIS.

BY the waters of Babylon we sat down and wept,
Remembering thee,
That for ages of agony hast endured, and slept,
And wouldst not see.

By the waters of Babylon we stood up and sang,
Considering thee,
That a blast of deliverance in the darkness rang,
To set thee free.

And with trumpets and thunderings and with morn-
ing song
Came up the light;
And thy spirit uplifted thee to forget thy wrong
As day doth night.

And thy sons were dejected not any more, as then
When thou wast shamed;
When thy lovers went heavily without heart, as men
Whose life was maimed.

In the desolate distances, with a great desire,
For thy love's sake,
With our hearts going back to thee, they were filled
with fire,
Were nigh to break.

It was said to us : " Verily ye are great of heart,
 But ye shall bend ;
 Ye are bondsmen and bondswomen, to be scourged
 and smart,
 To toil and tend."

And with harrows men harrowed us, and subdued
 with spears,
 And crushed with shame ;
 And the summer and winter was, and the length of
 years,
 And no change came.

By the rivers of Italy, by the sacred streams,
 By town, by tower,
 There was feasting with revelling, there was sleep
 with dreams,
 Until thine hour.

And they slept and they rioted on their rose-hung
 beds,
 With mouths on flame,
 And with love-locks vine-chapleted, and with rose-
 crowned heads
 And robes of shame.

And they knew not their forefathers, nor the hills and
 streams
 And words of power,
 Nor the gods that were good to them, but with
 songs and dreams
 Filled up their hour.

By the rivers of Italy, by the dry streams' beds,
 When thy time came,
There was casting of crowns from them, from their
 young men's heads,
 The crowns of shame.

By the horn of Eridanus, by the Tiber mouth,
 As thy day rose,
They arose up and girded them to the north and
 south,
 By seas, by snows.

As a water in January the frost confines,
 Thy kings bound thee ;
As a water in April is, in the new-blown vines,
 Thy sons made free.

And thy lovers that looked for thee, and that mourned
 from far,
 For thy sake dead,
We rejoiced in the light of thee, in the signal star
 Above thine head.

In thy grief had we followed thee, in thy passion
 loved,
 Loved in thy loss ;
In thy shame we stood fast to thee, with thy pangs
 were moved,
 Clung to thy cross.

By the hillside of Calvary we beheld thy blood,
 Thy bloodred tears,
As a mother's in bitterness, an unebbing flood,
 Year upon years.

And the north was Gethsemane, without leaf or
bloom,

A garden sealed ;

And the south was Aceldama, for a sanguine fume
Hid all the field.

By the stone of the sepulchre we returned to weep,
From far, from prison ;

And the guards by it keeping it we beheld asleep,
But thou wast risen.

And an angel's similitude by the unsealed grave,
And by the stone :

And the voice was angelical, to whose words God
gave

Strength like his own.

"Lo, the graveclothes of Italy that are folded up
In the grave's gloom !

And the guards as men wrought upon with a
charmed cup,

By the open tomb.

"And her body most beautiful, and her shining head,
These are not here ;

For your mother, for Italy, is not surely dead :
Have ye no fear.

"As of old time she spake to you, and you hardly
heard,

Hardly took heed,

So now also she saith to you, yet another word,
Who is risen indeed.

"By my saying she saith to you, in your ears she
saith,

Who hear these things,
Put no trust in men's royalties, nor in great men's
breath,
Nor words of kings.

"For the life of them vanishes and is no more seen,
Nor no more known ;
Nor shall any remember him if a crown hath been,
Or where a throne.

"Unto each man his handiwork, unto each his crown,
The just Fate gives ;
Whoso takes the world's life on him and his own
lays down,
He, dying so, lives.

"Whoso bears the whole heaviness of the wronged
world's weight
And puts it by,
It is well with him suffering, though he face man's
fate ;
How should he die ?

"Seeing death has no part in him any more, no power
Upon his head ;
He has bought his eternity with a little hour,
And is not dead.

"For an hour, if ye look for him, he is no more found,
For one hour's space ;
Then ye lift up your eyes to him and behold him
crowned,
A deathless face.

“On the mountains of memory, by the world’s well-
springs,
 In all men’s eyes,
Where the light of the life of him is on all past things,
 Death only dies.

“Not the light that was quenched for us, nor the
deeds that were,
 Nor the ancient days,
Nor the sorrows not sorrowful, nor the face most
fair
 Of perfect praise.”

So the angel of Italy’s resurrection said,
 So yet he saith ;
So the son of her suffering, that from breasts nigh
dead
 Drew life, not death.

That the pavement of Golgotha should be white as
snow,
 Not red, but white ;
That the waters of Babylon should no longer flow,
 And men see light.

ERECHTHEUS.

A TRAGEDY.

1876.

ALGERNON CHARLES SWINBURNE,

CHORUS :—STORM AND BATTLE.

LET us lift up the strength of our hearts in song,
And our souls to the height of the darkling day.
If the wind in our eyes blow blood for spray,
Be the spirit that breathes in us life more strong,
Though the prow reel round and the helm point wrong,
And sharp reefs whiten the shoreward way.

For the steersman time sits hidden astern,
With dark hand plying the rudder of doom,
And the surf-smoke under it flies like fume
As the blast shears off and the oar blades churn
The foam of our lives that to death return,
Blown back as they break to the gulfing gloom.

What cloud upon heaven is arisen, what shadow,
what sound,
From the world beyond earth, from the night
underground,
That scatters from wings unbeholden the weight of
its darkness around ?

For the sense of my spirit is broken, and blinded its eye,
As the soul of a sick man ready to die,
With fear of the hour that is on me, with dread if
an end be not nigh.

O Earth, O Gods of the land, have ye heart now
to see and to hear
What slays with terror mine eyesight and seals
mine ear?
O fountains of streams everlasting, are all ye not
shrunk up and withered for fear?

Lo, night is arisen on the noon, and her hounds
are in quest by day,
And the world is fulfilled of the noise of them
crying for their prey,
And the sun's self stricken in heaven, and cast out
of his course as a blind man astray.

From east to west of the south sea-line
Glitters the lightning of spears that shine;
As a storm-cloud swoln that comes up from the
skirts of the sea
By the wind for helmsman to shoreward ferried,
So black behind them the live storm serried
Shakes earth with the tramp of its foot, and the
terror to be.

Shall the sea give death whom the land gave birth?
O Earth, fair mother, O sweet live Earth,
Hide us again in thy womb from the waves of it,
help us or hide.

As a sword is the heart of the God thy brother,
But thine as the heart of a new-made mother,
To deliver thy sons from his ravin, and rage of his tide.
O strong north wind, the pilot of cloud and rain,
For the gift we gave thee what gift hast thou given
us again ?
O God, dark-winged, deep-throated, a terror to forth-
faring ships by night,
What bride-song is this that is blown on the blast
of thy breath ?
A gift but of grief to thy kinsmen, a song but of
death,
For the bride's folk weeping, and woe for her father,
who finds thee against him in fight.

Turn back from us, turn thy battle, take heed of
our cry ;
Let thy dread breath sound, and the waters of
war be dry ;
Let thy strong wrath shatter the strength of our foe-
men, the sword of their strength and the shield ;
As vapours in heaven, or as waves or the wrecks
of ships,
So break thou the ranks of their spears with the
breath of thy lips,
Till their corpses have covered and clothed as with
raiment the face of the sword-ploughed field.

O son of the rose-red morning, O God twin-born
with the day,
O wind with the young sun waking, and winged
for the same wide way,

Give up not the house of thy kin, to the host thou
hast marshalled from northward for prey.

From the cold of thy cradle in Thrace, from the
mists of the fountains of night,

From the bride-bed of dawn whence day leaps
laughing, on fire for his flight,

Come down with their doom in thine hand on the
ships thou hast brought up against us to
fight.

For now not in word but in deed is the harvest
of spears begun,

And its clamour outbellows the thunder, its
lightning outlightens the sun.

From the springs of the morning it thunders and
lightens across and afar

To the wave where the moonset ends and the fall of
the last low star.

With a trampling of drenched red hoofs and an
earthquake of men that meet,

Strong war sets hand to the scythe, and the
furrows take fire from his feet.

Earth groans from her great rent heart, and the
hollows of rocks are afraid,

And the mountains are moved, and the valleys as
waves in a storm-wind swayed.

From the roots of the hills to the plain's dim verge
and the dark loud shore,

Air shudders with shrill spears crossing, and hurtling
of wheels that roar.

As the grinding of teeth in the jaws of a lion that
foam as they gnash

Is the shriek of the axles that loosen, the shock of
the poles that crash.
The dense manes darken and glitter, the mouths of
the mad steeds champ,
Their heads flash blind through the battle, and death's
foot rings in their tramp.
For a fourfold host upon earth and in heaven is
arrayed for the fight,
Clouds ruining in thunder and armies encountering
as clouds in the night.
Mine ears are amazed with the terror of trumpets,
with darkness mine eyes,
At the sound of the sea's host charging that deafens
the roar of the sky's.
White frontlet is dashed upon frontlet, and horse
against horse reels hurled,
And the gorge of the gulfs of the battle is wide for
the spoil of the world.
And the meadows are cumbered with shipwreck of
chariots that founder on land,
And the horsemen are broken with breach as of
breakers, and scattered as sand.
Through the roar and recoil of the charges that
mingle their cries and confound,
Like fire are the notes of the trumpets that flash
through the darkness of sound.
As the swing of the sea churned yellow that sways
with the wind as it swells
Is the lift and relapse of the wave of the chargers
that clash with their bells;
And the clang of the sharp shrill brass through the
burst of the wave as it shocks
Rings clean as the clear wind's cry through the roar
of the surge on the rocks:

And the heads of the steeds in their headgear of war,
and their corseleted breasts,
Gleam broad as the brows of the billows that brighten
the storm with their crests,
Gleam dread as their bosoms that heave to the ship-
wrecking wind as they rise,
Filled full of the terror and thunder of water, that
slays as it dies.

So dire is the glare of their foreheads, so fearful the
fire of their breath,
And the light of their eyeballs enkindled so bright
with the lightnings of death ;
And the foam of their mouths as the sea's when the
jaws of its gulf are as graves,
And the ridge of their necks as the wind-shaken
mane on the ridges of waves :
And their fetlocks afire as they rear drip thick with
a dewfall of blood
As the lips of the rearing breaker with froth of the
manslaying flood.
And the whole plain reels and resounds as the fields
of the sea by night
When the stroke of the wind falls darkling, and death
is the seafarer's light.

But thou, fair beauty of heaven, dear face of the day
nigh dead,
What horror hath hidden thy glory, what hand hath
muffled thine head ?
O sun, with what song shall we call thee, or ward
off thy wrath by what name,
With what prayer shall we seek to thee, soothe with
what incense, assuage with what gift,

If thy light be such only as lightens to deathward
the seaman adrift

With the fire of his house for a beacon, that foemen
have wasted with flame ?

Arise now, lift up thy light ; give ear to us, put forth
thine hand,

Reach toward us thy torch of deliverance,—a lamp
for the night of the land.

• Thine eye is the light of the living, no lamp for the
dead ;

O, lift up the light of thine eye on the dark of our
dread.

Who hath blinded thee ? who hath prevailed on
thee ? who hath ensnared ?

Who hath broken thy bow, and the shafts for thy
battle prepared ?

Have they found out a fetter to bind thee, a chain for
thine arm that was bared ?

Be the name of thy conqueror set forth, and the
might of thy master declared.

O God, fair God of the morning, O glory of
day,

What ails thee to cast from thy forehead its garland
away ?

To pluck from thy temples their chaplet enwreathed
of the light,

And bind on the brows of thy godhead a frontlet of
night ?

Thou hast loosened the necks of thine horses, and
goaded their flanks with affright,

To the race of a course that we know not on ways
that are hid from our sight.

As a wind through the darkness the wheels of their
chariot are whirled,

And the light of its passage is night on the face of
the world.

And there falls from the wings of thy glory no help
from on high,

But a shadow that smites us with fear and desire of
thine eye.

For our hearts are as reeds that a wind on the water
bows down and goes by,

To behold not thy comfort in heaven that hath left
us untimely to die.

POEMS AND BALLADS.

(SECOND SERIES.)

1878.

ALGERNON CHARLES SWINBURNE.

I.

WINTER IN NORTHUMBERLAND.

FROM "FOUR SONGS OF FOUR SEASONS."

I.

OUTSIDE the garden
The wet skies harden ;
The gates are barred on
The summer side :
"Shut out the flower-time,
Sunbeam and shower-time,
Make way for our time,"
Wild winds have cried.
Green once and cheery,
The woods, worn weary,
Sigh as the dreary
Weak sun goes home :
A great wind grapples
The wave, and dapples
The dead green floor of the sea with foam.

II.

Through fell and moorland,
And salt-sea foreland,
Our noisy norland
 Resounds and rings ;
Waste waves thereunder
Are blown in sunder,
And winds make thunder
 With cloudwide wings ;
Sea-drift makes dimmer
The beacon's glimmer ;
Nor sail nor swimmer
 Can try the tides ;
And snowdrifts thicken
Where, when leaves quicken,
Under the heather the sundew hides.

III.

Green land and red land,
Moorside and headland,
Are white as dead land,
 Are all as one ;
Nor honied heather
Nor bells to gather,
Fair with fair weather
 And faithful sun :
Fierce frost has eaten
All flowers that sweeten
The fells rain-beaten ;
 And winds their foes
Have made the snow's bed
Down in the rose-bed ;
Deep in the snow's bed bury the rose.

IV.

Bury her deeper
Than any sleeper ;
Sweet dreams will keep her
 All day, all night ;
Though sleep benumb her
And time o'ercome her,
She dreams of summer,
 And takes delight,
Dreaming and sleeping
In love's good keeping,
While rain is weeping
 And no leaves cling ;
Winds will come bringing her
Comfort, and singing her
Stories and songs and good news of the spring.

V.

Draw the white curtain
Close, and be certain
She takes no hurt in
 Her soft low bed ;
She feels no colder,
And grows not older,
Though snows enfold her
 From foot to head ;
She turns not chilly
Like weed and lily
In marsh or hilly
 High watershed,
Or green soft island
In lakes of highland ;
She sleeps awhile, and she is not dead.

VI.

For all the hours,
Come sun, come showers,
Are friends of flowers,
 And fairies all ;
When frost entrapped her,
They came and lapped her
In leaves, and wrapped her
 With shroud and pall ;
In red leaves wound her,
With dead leaves bound her
Dead brows, and round her
 A death-knell-rang ;
Rang the death-bell for her,
Sang, "is it well for her,
Well, is it well with you, rose ? " they sang.

VII.

O what and where is
The rose now, fairies,
So shrill the air is,
 So wild the sky ?
Poor last of roses,
Her worst of woes is
The noise she knows is
 The winter's cry ;
His hunting hollo
Has scared the swallow ;
Fain would she follow
 And fain would fly :
But wind unsettles
Her poor last petals ;
Had she but wings, and she would not die.

VIII.

Come, as you love her,
Come close and cover
Her white face over,
And forth again
Ere sunset glances
On foam that dances,
Through lowering lances
Of bright white rain ;
And make your playtime
Of winter's daytime,
As if the Maytime
Were here to sing ;
As if the snowballs
Were soft like blowballs,
Blown in a mist from the stalk in the spring.

IX.

Each reed that grows in
Our stream is frozen,
The fields it flows in
Are hard and black ;
The water-fairy
Waits wise and wary
Till time shall vary
And thaws come back.
"O sister, water,"
The wind besought her,
"O twin-born daughter
Of spring with me,
Stay with me, play with me,
Take the warm way with me,
Straight for the summer and oversea."

X.

But winds will vary,
And wise and wary
The patient fairy
 Of water waits ;
All shrunk and wizen,
In iron prison,
Till spring re-risen
 Unbar the gates ;
Till, as with clamour
Of axe and hammer,
Chained streams that stammer
 And struggle in straits
Burst bonds that shiver,
And thaws deliver
The roaring river in stormy spates.

XI.

In fierce March weather
White waves break tether,
And whirled together
 At either hand,
Like weeds uplifted,
The tree-trunks rifted
In spars are drifted
 Like foam or sand,
Past swamp and shallow
And reed-beds callow,
Through pool and shallow,
 To wind and lee,
Till, no more tongue tied,
Full flood and young tide
Roar down the rapids and storm the sea.

XII.

As men's cheeks faded
On shores invaded,
When shorewards waded
 The lords of fight ;
When churl and craven
Saw hard on haven
The wide-winged raven
 At mainmast height
When monks affrighted
To windward sighted
The birds full-flighted
 Of swift sea-kings ;
So earth turns paler
When Storm the sailor
Steers in with a roar in the race of his wings.

XIII.

O strong sea-sailor,
Whose cheek turns paler
For wind or hail or
 For fear of thee ?
O far sea-farer,
O thunder-bearer,
Thy songs are rarer
 Than soft songs be.
O fleet-foot stranger,
O north-sea ranger
Through days of danger
 And ways of fear,
Blow thy horn here for us,
Blow the sky clear for us,
Send us the song of the sea to hear.

XIV.

Roll the strong stream of it
Up, till the scream of it
Wake from a dream of it
 Children that sleep,
Seamen that fare for them
Forth, with a prayer for them ;
Shall not God care for them,
 Angels not keep ?
Spare not the surges
Thy stormy scourges ;
Spare us the dirges
 Of wives that weep.
Turn back the waves for us :
Dig no fresh graves for us,
Wind, in the manifold gulfs of the deep.

XV.

O stout north-easter,
Sea-king, land waster,
For all thine haste, or
 Thy stormy skill,
Yet had'st thou never,
For all endeavour,
Strength to dis sever
 Or strength to spill,
Save of his giving
Who gave our living,
Whose hands are weaving
 What ours fulfil ;
Whose feet tread under
The storms and thunder ;
Who made our wonder to work his will.

XVI.

His years and hours,
His world's blind powers,
His stars and flowers,
 His nights and days,
Sea-tide and river,
And waves that shiver,
Praise God the giver
 Of tongues to praise.
Winds in their blowing,
And fruits in growing ;
Time in its going,
 While time shall be ;
In death and living,
With one thanksgiving,
Praise him whose hand is the strength of the sea.

II.

A FORSAKEN GARDEN.

IN a coign of the cliff between lowland and highland,
At the sea-down's edge between windward and lee,
Walled round with rocks as an inland island,
The ghost of a garden fronts the sea.
A girdle of brushwood and thorn encloses
The steep square slope of the blossomless bed
Where the weeds that grew green from the graves of
its roses
Now lie dead.

The fields fall southward, abrupt and broken,
To the low last edge of the long lone land.
If a step should sound or a word be spoken,
Would a ghost not rise at the strange guest's hand ?
So long have the grey bare walls lain guestless,
Through branches and briers if a man make way,
He shall find no life but the sea-wind's, restless
Night and day.

The dense hard passage is blind and stifled
That crawls by a track none turn to climb
To the strait waste place that the years have rifled
Of all but the thorns that are touched not of time.
The thorns he spares when the rose is taken ;
The rocks are left when he wastes the plain.
The wind that wanders, the weeds wind shaken,
These remain.

Not a flower to be pressed of the foot that falls not ;
As the heart of a dead man the seed-plots are dry ;
From the thicket of thorns whence the nightingale calls not,
Could she call, there were never a rose to reply.
Over the meadows that blossom and wither,
Rings but the note of a sea-bird's song ;
Only the sun and the rain come hither
All year long.

The sun burns sere and the rain dishevels
One gaunt bleak blossom of scentless breath.
Only the wind here hovers and revels
In a round where life seems barren as death.
Here there was laughing of old, there was weeping,
Haply, of lovers none ever will know,
Whose eyes went seaward a hundred sleeping
Years ago.

Heart handfast in heart as they stood, "Look thither,"
Did he whisper ? "look forth from the flowers to the sea ;
For the foam-flowers endure when the rose-blossoms wither
And men that love lightly may die—but we ?"
And the same wind sang and the same waves whitened,
And or ever the garden's last petals were shed,
In the lips that had whispered, the eyes that had lightened,
Love was dead.

Or they loved their life through, and then went whither ?
And were one to the end—but what end who knows ?
Love deep as the sea as a rose must wither,
As the rose-red seaweed that mocks the rose.
Shall the dead take thought for the dead to love them ?
What love was ever as deep as a grave ?
They are loveless now as the grass above them
Or the wave.

All are at one now, roses and lovers,
Not known of the cliffs and the fields and the sea.
Not a breath of the time that has been hovers
In the air now soft with a summer to be.
Not a breath shall there sweeten the seasons hereafter
Of the flowers or the lovers that laugh now or weep,
When as they that are free now of weeping and
laughter
We shall sleep.

Here death may deal not again for ever ;
Here change may come not till all change end.
From the graves they have made they shall rise up never,
Who have left nought living to ravage and rend.
Earth, stones, and thorns of the wild ground growing,
While the sun and the rain live, these shall be ;
Till a last wind's breath upon all these blowing
Roll the sea.

Till the slow sea rise and the sheer cliff crumble,
Till terrace and meadow the deep gulfs drink,
Till the strength of the waves of the high tides humble
The fields that lessen, the rocks that shrink ;
Here now in his triumph where all things falter,
Stretched out on the spoils that his own hand spread,
As a god self-slain on his own strange altar,
Death lies dead.

III.

EX-VOTO.

WHEN their last hour shall rise
Pale on these mortal eyes,
Herself like one that dies,
And kiss me dying
The cold last kiss, and fold
Close round my limbs her cold
Soft shade as raiment rolled
And leave them lying,

If aught my soul would say
Might move to hear me pray
The birth-god of my day
That he might hearken,
This grace my heart should crave,
To find no landward grave
That worldly springs make brave
World's winters darken

Nor grow through gradual hours
The cold blind seed of flowers
Made by new beams and showers
From limbs that moulder,
Nor take my part with earth,
But find for death's new birth
A bed of larger girth,
More chaste and colder.

Not earth's for spring and fall,
Not earth's at heart, not all
Earth's making, though men call
 Earth only mother,
Not hers at heart she bare
Me, but thy child, O fair
Sea, and thy brother's care,
 The wind thy brother.

Yours was I born, and ye,
The sea-wind and the sea,
Made all my soul in me
 A song for ever,
A harp to string and smite
For love's sake of the bright
Wind and the sea's delight,
 To fail them never :

Not while on this side death
I hear what either saith
And drink of either's breath
 With heart's thanksgiving
That in my veins like wine
Some sharp salt blood of thine,
Some springtide pulse of brine,
 Yet leaps up living.

When thy salt lips wellnigh
Sucked in my mouth's last sigh,
Grudged I so much to die
 This death as others ?
Was it no ease to think
The chalice from whose brink
Fate gave me death to drink
 Was thine,—my mother's ?

Thee too, the all-fostering earth,
Fair as thy fairest birth,
More than thy worthiest worth,
 We call, we know thee,
More sweet and just and dread
Than live men highest of head
Or even thy holiest dead
 Laid low below thee.

The sunbeam on the sheaf,
The dewfall on the leaf,
All joy, all grace, all grief,
 Are thine for giving ;
Of thee our loves are born,
Our lives and loves, that mourn
And triumph ; tares with corn,
 Dead seed with living :

All good and ill things done
In eyeshot of the sun
At last in thee made one
 Rest well contented ;
All words of all man's breath
And works he doth or saith,
All wholly done to death,
 None long lamented.

A slave to sons of thee,
Thou, seeming, yet art free ;
But who shall make the sea
 Serve even in seeming ?
What plough shall bid it bear
Seed to the sun and the air,
Fruit for thy strong sons' fare,
 Fresh wine's foam streaming ?

What oldworld son of thine,
Made drunk with death as wine,
Hath drunk the bright sea's brine
 With lips of laughter ?
Thy blood they drink ; but he
Who hath drunken of the sea
Once deeplier than of thee
 Shall drink not after.

Of thee thy sons of men
Drink deep, and thirst again ;
For wine in feasts, and then
 In fields for slaughter :
But thirst shall touch not him
Who hath felt with sense grown dim
Rise, covering lip and limb,
 The wan sea's water.

All fire of thirst that aches
The salt sea cools and slakes
More than all springs or lakes,
 Freshets or shallows ;
Wells where no beam can burn
Through frondage of the fern
That hides from hart and hern
 The haunt it hallows.

Peace with all graves on earth
For death or sleep or birth
Be alway, one in worth
 One with another ;
But when my time shall be,
O mother, O my sea,
Alive or dead, take me,
 Me too, my mother.

IV.

AT PARTING.

FOR a day and night Love sang to us, played
with us,

Folded us round from the dark and the light ;
And our hearts were fulfilled of the music he made
with us,

Made with our hearts and our lips while he stayed
with us,

Stayed in mid passage his pinions from flight
For a day and a night.

From his foes that kept watch with his wings had
he hidden us,

Covered us close from the eyes that would smite,
From the feet that had tracked and the tongues that
had chidden us

Sheltering in shade of the myrtles forbidden us

Spirit and flesh growing one with delight

For a day and a night.

But his wings will not rest and his feet will not stay
for us :

Morning is here in the joy of its might ;

With his breath has he sweetened a night and a
day for us :

Now let him pass, and the myrtles make way for us ;

Love can but last in us here at his height

For a day and a night.

A MIDSUMMER HOLIDAY.

1884.

ALGERNON CHARLES SWINBURNE,

ON THE VERGE.

HERE begins the sea that ends not till the world's
end. Where we stand,
Could we know the next high sea-mark set beyond
these waves that gleam,
We should know what never man hath known, nor
eye of man hath scanned.
Nought beyond these coiling clouds that melt like
fume of shrines that steam
Breaks or stays the strength of waters till they pass
our bounds of dream.
Where the waste Land's End leans westward, all
the seas it watches roll
Find their border fixed beyond them, and a world-
wide shore's control :
These whereby we stand no shore beyond us limits :
these are free.
Gazing hence, we see the water that grows iron
round the Pole,
From the shore that hath no shore beyond it set in
all the sea.
Sail on sail along the sea-line fades and flashes ;
here on land
Flash and fade the wheeling wings on wings of
mews that plunge and scream.

Hour on hour along the line of life and time's evasive
strand

Shines and darkens, wanes and waxes, slays and
dies : and scarce they seem

More than motes that thronged and trembled in the
brief noon's breath and beam.

Some with crying and wailing, some with notes like
sound of bells that toll,

Some with sighing and laughing, some with words
that blessed and made us whole,

Passed, and left us, and we know not what they
were, nor what were we.

Would we know, being mortal? Never breath of
answering whisper stole

From the shore that hath no shore beyond it set in
all the sea.

Shadows, would we question darkness? Ere our
eyes and brows be fanned

Round with airs of twilight, washed with dew from
sleep's eternal stream,

Would we know sleep's guarded secret? Ere the
fire consume the brand,

Would it know if yet its ashes may requicken? yet
we deem

Surely man may know, or ever night unyoke her
starry team,

What the dawn shall be, or if the dawn shall be
not : yea, the scroll

Would we read of sleep's dark scripture, pledge of
peace or doom of dole.

Ah, but here man's heart leaps, yearning toward the
gloom with venturous glee,

Though his pilot eye behold nor bay nor harbour,
rock nor shoal,
From the shore that hath no shore beyond it set in
all the sea.

Friend, who knows if death indeed have life or life
have death for goal ?
Day nor night can tell us, nor may seas declare nor
skies unroll
What has been from everlasting, or if aught shall
always be.
Silence answering only strikes response reverberate
on the soul
From the shore that hath no shore beyond it set in
all the sea.

IRISTRAM OF LYONESSE.

1882.

ALGERNON CHARLES SWINBURNE.

I.

DEDICATORY SONNET TO THEODORE WATTS.

SPRING speaks again, and all our woods are stirred,
And all our wide glad wastes a-flower around
That twice have heard keen April's clarion sound
Since here we first together saw and heard
Spring's light reverberate and reiterate word
Shineforth and speak in season. Life stands crowned
Here with the best one thing it ever found,
As of my soul's best birthdays dawns the third.

There is a friend that as the wise man saith
Cleaves closer than a brother : nor to me
Hath time not shown, through days like waves at strife,
This truth more sure than all things else but death,
This pearl most perfect found in all the sea
That washes towards your feet these waifs of life.

II.

(FROM "THE SAILING OF THE SWALLOW.")

AND while they sat at speech as at a feast,
Came a light wind fast hardening forth of the east
And blackening till its might had marred the skies ;
And the sea thrilled as with heart-sundering sighs
One after one drawn, with each breath it drew,
And the green hardened into iron blue,
And the soft light went out of all its face.
Then Tristram girt him for an oarsman's place,
And took his oar and smote, and toiled with might,
In the east wind's full face and the strong sea's spite
Labouring ; and all the rowers rowed hard, but he
More mightily than any wearier three.
And Iseult watched him rowing with sinless eyes
That loved him but in holy girlish wise
For noble joy in his fair manliness
And trust and tender wonder ; none the less
She thought if God had given her grace to be
Man, and make war on danger of earth and sea,
Even such a man she would be ; for his stroke
Was mightiest as the mightier water broke,
And in sheer measure like strong music drave
Clean through the wet weight of the wallowing wave,
And as a tune before a great king played
For triumph was the tune their strong strokes made,
And sped the ship through with smooth strife of oars
Over the mid sea's grey foam-paven floors,
For all the loud breach of the waves at will.
So for an hour they fought the storm out still,
And the shorn foam spun from the blades, and high
The keel sprang from the wave-ridge, and the sky
Glared at them for a breath's space through the rain ;

Then the bows with a sharp shock plunged again
Down, and the sea clashed on them, and so rose
The bright stem like one panting from swift blows,
And as a swimmer's joyous beaten head
Rears itself laughing, so in that sharp stead
The light ship lifted her long quivering bows
As might the man his buffeted strong brows
Out of the wave-breach ; for with one stroke yet
Went all men's oars together, strongly set
As to loud music, and with hearts uplift
They smote their strong way through the drench and drift
Till the keen hour had chafed itself to death,
And the east wind fell fitfully, breath by breath,
Tired ; and across the thin and slackening rain
Sprang the face southward of the sun again.
Then all they rested and were eased at heart ;
And Iseult rose up where she sat apart,
And with her sweet soul deepening her deep eyes
Cast the furs from her and subtle embroideries
That wrapped her from the storming rain and spray,
And shining like all April in one day,
Hair, face, and throat dashed with the straying showers,
She stood, the first of all the whole world's flowers,
And laughed on Tristram with her eyes, and said,
"I too have heart then, I was not afraid."

III.

(FROM "THE MAIDEN MARRIAGE.")

FAST bound they brought him down a weary way
With forty knights about him, and their chief
That traitor who for trust had given him grief,
To the old hoar chapel, like a strait stone tomb
Sheer on the sea-rocks, there to take his doom :
How, seeing he needs must die, he bade them yet
Bethink them if they durst for shame forget

What deeds for Cornwall had he done, and wrought
For all their sake what rescue, when he fought
Against the fierce foul Irish foe that came
To take of them for tribute in their shame
Three hundred heads of children ; whom in fight
His hand redeeming slew Moraunt the knight
That none durst lift his eyes against, not one
Had heart but he, who now had help of none,
To take the battle ; whence great shame it were
To knighthood, yea, foul shame on all men there,
To see him die so shamefully : nor durst
One man look up, nor one make answer first,
Save even the very traitor, who defied
And would have slain him naked in his pride,
But he, that saw the sword plucked forth to slay,
Looked on his hands, and wrenched their bonds away,
Haling those twain that he went bound between
Suddenly to him, and kindling in his mien
Shone lion-fashion forth with eyes alight,
And lion-wise leapt on that kinsman knight
And wrung forth of his felon hands with might
The sword that should have slain him weaponless
And smote him sheer down : then came all the press
All raging in upon him ; but he wrought
So well for his deliverance as they fought
That ten strong knights rejoicingly he slew,
And took no wound, nor wearied : then the crew
Waxed greater, and their cry on him ; but he
Had won the chapel now above the sea
That chafed right under : then the heart in him
Sprang, seeing the low cliff clear to leap, and swim
Right out by the old blithe way the sea-mew takes
Across the bounding billow-belt that breaks
For ever, but the loud bright chain it makes

To bind the bridal bosom of the land
Time shall unlink not ever, till his hand
Falls by its own last blow dead : thence again
Might he win forth into the green great main
Far on beyond, and there yield up his breath
At least, with God's will, by no shameful death,
Or haply save himself, and come anew
Some long day later, ere sweet life were through.
And as the sea-gull hovers high, and turns
With eyes wherein the keen heart glittering yearns
Down toward the sweet green sea whereon the broad
 noon burns,
And suddenly, soul-stricken with delight,
Drops, and the glad wave gladdens, and the light
Sees wing and wave confuse their fluttering white,
So Tristram one brief breathing space apart
Hung, and gazed down ; then with exulting heart
Plunged : and the fleet foam round a joyous head
Flashed, that shot under, and ere a shaft had sped
Rose again radiant, a rejoicing star,
And high along the water-ways afar
Triumphed : and all they deemed he needs must die ;
But Gouvernayle his squire, that watched hard by,
Sought where perchance a man might win ashore,
Striving, with strong limbs labouring long and sore,
And there abode an hour : till as from fight,
Crowned with hard conquest won by mastering might,
Hardly, but happier for the imperious toil,
Swam the knight in forth of the close waves' coil,
Sea-satiate, bruised with the buffets of the brine,
Laughing, and flushed as one afire with wine.

IV.

(FROM "THE LAST PILGRIMAGE.")

BUT by the sea-banks where at morn their foes
Might find them, lay those knightly name-fellows,
One sick with grief of heart and sleepless, one
With heart of hope triumphant as the sun
Dreaming asleep of love and fame and fight :
But sleep at last wrapped warm the wan young knight;
And Tristram with the first pale windy light
Woke ere the sun spake summons, and his ear
Caught the sea's call that fired his heart to hear,
A noise of waking waters : for till dawn
The sea was silent as a mountain lawn
When the wind speaks not, and the pines are dumb,
And summer takes her fill ere autumn come
Of life more soft than slumber : but ere day
Rose, and the first beam smote the bounding bay,
Up sprang the strength of the dark East, and took
With its wide wings the waters as they shook,
And hurled them huddling on aheap, and cast
The full sea shoreward with a great glad blast,
Blown from the heart of morning : and with joy
Full-souled and perfect passion, as a boy
That leaps up light to wrestle with the sea
For pure heart's gladness and large ecstasy,
Up sprang the might of Tristram ; and his soul
Yearned for delight within him, and waxed whole
As a young child's with rapture of the hour
That brought his spirit and all the world to flower
And all the bright blood in his veins beat time
To the wind's clarion and the water's chime
That called him and he followed it and stood

On the sand's verge before the grey great flood
Where the white hurtling heads of waves that met
Rose unsaluted of the sunrise yet.
And from his heart's root outward shot the sweet
Strong joy that thrilled him to the hands and feet,
Filling his limbs with pleasure and glad might,
And his soul drank the immeasurable delight
That earth drinks in with morning, and the free
Limitless love that lifts the stirring sea
When on her bare bright bosom as a bride
She takes the young sun, perfect in his pride,
Home to his place with passion : and the heart
Trembled for joy within the man whose part
Was here not lest in living ; and his mind
Was wrapped abroad beyond man's meaner kind
And pierced with love of all things and with mirth
Moved to make one with heaven and heavenlike earth
And with the light live water. So awhile
He watched the dim sea with a deepening smile,
And felt the sound and savour and swift flight
Of waves that fled beneath the fading night
And died before the darkness, like a song
With harps between and trumpets blown along
Through the loud air of some triumphant day,
Sink through his spirit and purge all sense away
Save of the glorious gladness of his hour
And all the world about to break in flower
Before the sovereign laughter of the sun ;
And he, ere night's wide work lay all undone,
As earth from her bright body casts off night,
Cast off his raiment for a rapturous flight
And stood between the sea's edge and the sea
Naked, and godlike of his mould as he
Whose swift foot's sound shook all the towers of Troy ;

So clothed with might, so girt upon with joy,
As, ere the knife had shorn to feed the fire
His glorious hair before the unkindled pyre
Whereon the half of his great heart was laid,
Stood, in the light of his live limbs arrayed,
Child of heroic earth and heavenly sea,
The flower of all men : scarce less bright than he,
If any of all men latter-born might stand,
Stood Tristram, silent, on the glimmering strand.
Not long : but with a cry of love that rang
As from a trumpet golden-mouthed, he sprang,
As toward a mother's where his head might rest
Her child rejoicing, toward the strong sea's breast
That none may gird nor measure : and his heart
Sent forth a shout that bade his lips not part,
But triumphed in him silent : no man's voice,
No song, no sound of clarions that rejoice,
Can set that glory forth which fills with fire
The body and soul that have their whole desire
Silent, and freer than birds or dreams are free
Take all their will of all the encountering sea.
And toward the foam he bent and forward smote,
Laughing, and launched his body like a boat
Full to the sea-breach, and against the tide
Struck strongly forth with amorous arms made wide
To take the bright breast of the wave to his
And on his lips the sharp sweet minute's kiss
Given of the wave's lip for a breath's space curled
And pure as at the day-dawn of the world.
And round him all the bright rough shuddering sea
Kindled, as though the world were even as he,
Heart-stung with exultation of desire :
And all the life that moved him seemed to aspire,
As all the sea's life toward the sun : and still

Delight within him waxed with quickening will
More smooth and strong and perfect as a flame
That springs and spreads, till each glad limb became
A note of rapture in the tune of life,
Live music mild and keen as sleep and strife :
Till the sweet change that bids the sense grow sure
Of deeper depth and purity more pure
Wrapped him and lapped him round with clearer cold,
And all the rippling green grew royal gold
Between him and the far sun's rising rim.
And like the sun his heart rejoiced in him,
And brightened with a broadening flame of mirth :
And hardly seemed its life a part of earth,
But the life kindled of a fiery birth
And passion of a new-begotten son,
Between the live sea and the living sun
And mightier grew the joy to meet full-faced
Each wave, and mount with upward plunge, and taste
The rapture of its rolling strength, and cross
Its flickering crown of snows that flash and toss
Like plumes in battle's blithest charge, and thence
To match the next with yet more strenuous sense ;
Till on his eyes the light beat hard and bade
His face turn west and shoreward through the glad
Swift revel of the waters golden-clad,
And back with light reluctant heart he bore
Across the broad-backed rollers in to shore,
Strong-spirited for the chance and cheer of fight,
And donned his arms again, and felt the might
In all his limbs rejoice for strength, and praised
God for such life as that whereon he gazed,
And wist not surely its joy was even as fleet
As that which laughed and lapsed against his feet,
The bright thin grey foam-blossom, glad and hoar,

That flings its flower along the flowerless shore
On sand or shingle, and still with sweet strange
snows,

As where one great white storm-dishevelled rose
May rain her wild leaves on a windy land,
Strews for long leagues the sounding slope of strand,
And flower on flower falls flashing, and anew
A fresh light leaps up whence the last flash flew,
And casts its brief glad gleam of life away
To fade not flowerwise but as drops the day
Storm-smitten, when at once the dark devours
Heaven and the sea and earth with all their flowers ;
No star in heaven, on earth no rose to see,
But the white blown brief blossoms of the sea,
That make her green gloom starrier than the sky,
Dance yet before the tempest's tune, and die.
And all these things he glanced upon, and knew
How fair they shone, from earth's least flake of dew
To stretch of seas and imminence of skies,
Unwittingly, with unpresageful eyes,
For the last time. The world's half heavenly face,
The music of the silence of the place,
The confluence and the reflux of the sea,
The wind's note ringing over wold and lea,
Smote once more through him keen as fire that smote,
Rang once more through him one reverberate note,
That faded as he turned again and went,
Fulfilled by strenuous joy with strong content,
To take his last delight of labour done
That yet should be beholden of the sun.

HERSE.

1882.

ALGERNON CHARLES SWINBURNE.

WHEN grace is given us ever to behold
A child some sweet months old,
Love, laying across our lips his finger, saith,
Smiling, with bated breath,
Hush! for the holiest thing that lives is here,
And heaven's own heart how near!
How dare we, that may gaze not on the sun,
Gaze on this verier one?
Heart, hold thy peace; eyes, be cast down for shame;
Lips, breathe not yet its name.
In heaven they know what name to call it; we,
How should we know? For, see!
The adorable sweet living marvellous
Strange light that lightens us
Who gaze, desertless of such glorious grace,
Full in a babe's warm face!
All roses that the morning rears are nought,
All stars not worth a thought,
Set this one star against them, or suppose
As rival this one rose.
What price could pay with earth's whole weight of gold
One least flushed roseleaf's fold
Of all this dimpling store of smiles that shine
From each warm curve and line,
Each charm of flower-sweet flesh, to reillumine
The dappled rose-red bloom

Of all its dainty body, honey-sweet
 Clenched hands and curled up feet,
That on the roses of the dawn have trod
 As they came down from God,
And keep the flush and colour that the sky
 Takes when the sun comes nigh,
And keep the likeness of the smile their grace
 Evoked on God's own face
When, seeing this work of his most heavenly mood,
 He saw that it was good ?
For all its warm sweet body seems one smile,
 And mere men's love too vile
To meet it, or with eyes that worship dims
 Read o'er the little limbs,
Read all the book of all their beauties o'er,
 Rejoice, revere, adore,
Bow down and worship each delight in turn,
 Laugh, wonder, yield, and yearn.
But when our trembling kisses dare, yet dread,
 Even to draw nigh its head,
And touch, and scarce with touch or breath surprise
 Its mild miraculous eyes
Out of their viewless vision—O, what then,
 What may be said of men ?
What speech may name a new-born child? What word
 Earth ever spake or heard ?
The best men's tongue that ever glory knew
 Called that a drop of dew
Which from the breathing creature's kindly womb
 Came forth in blameless bloom.
We have no word, as had those men most high,
 To call a baby by.
Rose, ruby, lily, pearl of stormless seas—
 A better word than these,

A better sign it was than flower or gem
That love revealed to them :
They knew that whence comes light or quickening flame,
Thence only this thing came,
And only might be likened of our love
To somewhat born above,
Not even to sweetest things dropped else on earth,
Only to dew's own birth.
Nor doubt we but their sense was heavenly true,
Babe, when we gaze on you,
A dew-drop out of heaven whose colours are
More bright than sun or star,
As now, ere watching love dare fear or hope,
Lips, hands, and eyelids ope,
And all your life is mixed with earthly leaven.
O child, what news from heaven ?

SONNET.

HOPE AND FEAR.

1882.

ALGERNON CHARLES SWINBURNE.

BENEATH the shadow of dawn's aerial cope,
With eyes enkindled as the sun's own sphere,
Hope from the front of youth in godlike cheer
Looks Godward, past the shades where blind men grope
Round the dark door that prayers nor dreams can ope,
And makes for joy the very darkness dear
That gives her wide wings play; nor dreams that fear
At noon may rise and pierce the heart of hope.
Then, when the soul leaves off to dream and yearn,
May truth first purge her eyesight to discern
What once being known leaves time no power to appal;
Till youth at last, ere yet youth be not, learn
The kind wise word that falls from years that fall—
"Hope thou not much, and fear thou not at all."

A CENTURY OF ROUNDELS.

1883.

ALGERNON CHARLES SWINBURNE.

I.—TO CATULLUS.

MY brother, my Valerius, dearest head
Of all whose crowning bay-leaves crown their mother
Rome, in the notes first heard of thine I read
My brother.

No dust that death or time can strew may smother
Love and the sense of kinship inly bred
From loves and hates at one with one another.

To thee was Cæsar's self nor dear nor dread,
Song and the sea were sweeter each than other :
How should I living fear to call thee dead
My brother ?

II.—IN GUERNSEY.

(TO THEODORE WATTS.)

(III.)

ACROSS and along, as the bay's breadth opens,
and o'er us
Wild autumn exults in the wind, swift rapture and
strong
Impels us, and broader the wide waves brighten
before us
Across and along.

The whole world's heart is uplifted, and knows not
wrong ;

The whole world's life is a chant to the sea-tide's
chorus ;

Are we not as waves of the water, as notes of the
song ?

Like children unworn of the passions and toils that
wore us,

We breast for a season the breadth of the seas that
throng,

Rejoicing as they, to be borne as of old they bore us
Across and along.

David Gray.

1838-1861.

CONSIDERED as a period of production the brief life of David Gray was necessarily richer in vague promise than in memorable performance, but it was full of pathetic human interest. He was born on January 29th, 1838, in a cottage situated about a mile from the little town of Kirkintulloch and eight miles from the city of Glasgow. His father was a handloom weaver, and the boy obtained his education first at the village school where he acquired a knowledge of reading, writing, arithmetic, and the rudiments of Latin, and afterwards at the classes of the Glasgow University where he added to this little store a fuller knowledge of the language just mentioned, and a very fair acquaintance with Greek and French. His love of poetry seems to have been an inborn passion. During his boyhood and youth he made himself familiar with the best English poets—notably with Keats, his earliest model—and wrote much verse of his own, his most important production being “The Luggie,” a poem celebrating the charms of the little stream which ran close to his home. Conscious of power, and craving for recognition, he wrote numerous letters to various distinguished men, but failing to obtain any satisfying response, he determined to try his fate in London. He was kindly received by Mr. Monckton Milnes, afterwards Lord Houghton, who gave him some light copying

work to keep the wolf from the door, and sent "The Luggie" with a warm commendation to Thackeray, who was then editing the *Cornhill Magazine*. The poem was rejected, and Gray was in despair; but crushing as was this disappointment of his hopes it was not the worst thing that had befallen him. During the early days of his stay in London he had taken a violent cold which had settled upon his lungs, and it soon became evident that he was a doomed man. By the kindness of Mr. Milnes, Mr. Sydney Dobell, and other friends, he was sent to various health resorts; but as his physical weakness increased a longing for home grew daily more intense. In the January of 1861 he returned to the scenes of his childhood; during the spring, summer, and autumn of that year he rapidly declined. On the 2nd of December a specimen page of his poem, printed by the aid of friends, was placed in his hands; and on the following day the eyes of the poet were closed in death. *Quem Di diligunt, adolescens moritur.*

The epitaph which David Gray wrote for himself closed fitly with the pathetic words

"In Eden every flower is blown;"

and to gauge the potentialities of his genius is as impossible as would be to describe the petals of an unopened bud. We can, however, see that the bud is itself a thing of beauty. With some cadences echoed from the poets whom he best loved, "The Luggie" has a music and a vision of its own; and those who read the noble sonnets written "in the twilight" may well lament the songs of the noontide which remain for ever unsung.

JAMES ASHCROFT NOBLE.

EMPEDOCLES.

DAVID GRAY.

"He who to be deem'd
A god, leap'd fondly into *Ætna's* flames,—
Empedocles."—MILTON.

HOW, in the crystal smooth and azure sky,
Droop the clear, living sapphires, tremulous
And inextinguishably beautiful !
How the calm iridescence of their soft
Ethereal fire contrasts with the wild flame
Rising from this doomed mountain like the noise
Of ocean whirlwinds through the murky air !
Alone, alone ! yearning, ambitious ever !
Hope's agony ! O, ye immortal gods !
Regally sphered in your keen-silvered orbs,
Eternal, where fled that authentic fire,
Stolen by Prometheus ere the pregnant clouds
Rose from the sea, full of the deluge ! Where
Art thou, white lady of the morning ; white
Aurora, charioted by the fair Hours
Through amethystine mists weeping soft dews
Upon the meadow, as Apollo heaves
His constellation through the liquid dawn ?
Give me Tithonus' gift, thou orient
Undying Beauty ! and my love shall be
Cherubic worship, and my star shall walk
The plains of heaven, thy punctual harbinger !
O with thy ancient power prolong my days
For ever ; tear this flesh-thick cursed life

Enlinking me to this foul earth, the home
Of cold mortality, this nether hell !

Rise, mighty conflagrations ! and scare wild
These crowding shadows ! Far on the dim sea
Pale mariners behold thee, and the sails
Shine purpled by thy glare, and the slow oars
Drop ruby, and the trembling human souls
Wonder affrighted as their pitchy barks
Guided by Syrian pilots, ripple by
Hailing for craggy Calpe ; O ye frail
Weak human souls, I, lone Empedocles
Stand here unshivered as a steadfast god,
Scorning thy puny destinies.

I float

To cloud-enrobed Olympus on the wings
Of a rich dream, swift as the light of stars,
Swifter than Zophiel or Mercury
Upon his throne of adamantine gold
Jove sits superior, while the deities
Tread delicate the smooth cerulean floors.
Hebe, (with twin breasts like twin roes that feed
Among the lilies), in her taper hand
Bears the bright goblet, rough with gems and gold,
Filled with ambrosia to the lipping brim.
O, love and beauty of immortal life !
O, light divine, ethereal effluence
Of purity ! O, fragrancy of air,
Spikenard and calamus, cassia and balm,
With all the frankincense that ever fumed
From temple censers swung from pictured roofs,
Float warmly through the corridors of heaven.

Hiss ! moan ! shriek ! wreathe thy livid serpentine
Volutions, O ye earth-born flames ! and flout

The silent skies with strange fire, like a dawn
Rubific, terrible, a lurid glare!
Olympus shrinks beside thee! I, alone,
Like deity ignipotent, behold
Thy playful whirls and thy weird melody
Hear undismayed. O gods! shall I go near
And in the molten horror headlong plunge
Deathward, and that serene immortal life
Discover? Shriek your hellish discord out
Into the smoky firmament! Down roll
Your fat bituminous torrents to the sea,
Hot hissing! Far away in element
Untroubled rise the crystal battlements
Of the celestial mansion, where to be
Is my ambition; and O far away
From this dull earth in azure atmospheres
My star shall pant its silvery lustre, bright
With sempiternal radiance, voyaging
On blissful errands the pure marble air.

O, dominations and life-yielding powers,
Listen my yearning prayer: To be of ye—
Of thy grand hierarchy and old race
Plenipotent, I do a deed that dares
The draff of men to equal. You have given
Immortal life to common human men
Who common deeds achieved; nay, even for love
Some goddesses voluptuous have raised
Weak whiners from this curst sublunar world,
Pillowed them on snow bosoms in the bowers
Of Paradise! And shall Empedocles,
Who from the perilous grim edge of life
Leaps sheer into the liquid fire and meets
Death like a lover, not be sphered and made

A virtue ministrant? All you soft orbs
By pure intelligences piloted,
Incomprehensibly their glories show
Approving. O ye sparkle-moving fires
Of heaven, now silently above the flare
Of this red mountain shining, which of you
Shall be my home? Into whose stellar glow
Shall I arrive, bringing delight and life
And spiritual motion and dim fame?
Hiss, fiery serpents! Your sweet breathings warm
My face as I approach ye. Flap, wild wings,
Ye dragons! flaming round this mouth of hell,
To me the mouth of heaven.

THE LUGGIE.

DAVID GRAY.

WINTER.

(A SELECTION.)

A WINTER day ! the feather-silent snow
Thickens the air with strange delight, and lays
A fairy carpet on the barren lea.
No sun, yet all around that inward light
Which is in purity,—a soft moonshine,
The silvery dimness of a happy dream.
How beautiful ! afar on moorland ways,
Bosomed by mountains, darkened by huge glens,
(Where the lone altar raised by Druid hands
Stands like a mournful phantom), hidden clouds
Let fall soft beauty, till each green fir branch
Is plumed and tassel'd, till each heather stalk
Is delicately fringed. The sycamores,
Thro' all their mystical entanglement
Of boughs, are draped with silver. All the green
Of sweet leaves playing with the subtle air
In dainty murmuring ; the obstinate drone
Of limber bees that in the monkshood bells
House diligent ; the imperishable glow
Of summer sunshine never more confessed
The harmony of nature, the divine
Diffusive spirit of the Beautiful.
Out in the snowy dimness, half revealed
Like ghosts in glimpsing moonshine, wildly run

The children in bewildering delight.
 There is a living glory in the air—
 A glory in the hush'd air, in the soul
 A palpitating wonder hush'd in awe.

* * * * *

Now underneath the ice the Luggie growls,
 And to the polished smoothness curlers come
 Rudely ambitious. Then for happy hours
 The clinking stones are slid from wary hands,
 And *Barleycorn*, best wine for surly airs,
 Bites i' th' mouth, and ancient jokes are crack'd.
 And oh, the journey homeward, when the sun
 Low-rounding to the west, in ruddy glow
 Sinks large, and all the amber-skirted clouds,
 His flaming retinue, with dark'ning glow
 Diverge! The broom is brandished as the sign
 Of conquest, and impetuously they boast
 Of how this shot was played—with what a bend
 Peculiar—the perfection of all art—
 That stone came rolling grandly to the *Tee*
 With victory crown'd, and flinging wide the rest
 In lordly crash! Within the village inn,
 What time the stars are sown in ether keen,
 Clear and acute with brightness; and the moon
 Sharpens her semicircle; and the air
 With bleakly shivering sough cuts like a scythe,
 They by the roaring chimney sit, and quaff
 The beaded "*Usqueba*" with sugar dash'd.
 Oh, when the precious liquid fires the brain
 To joy, and every heart beats fast with mirth
 And ancient fellowship, what nervy grasps
 Of horny hands o'er tables of rough oak!
 What singing of "*Lang Syne*" till tear drops shine,
 And friendships brighten as the evening wanes!

Now the dead earth, wrapt solemnly, expects
The punctual resurrection of the Spring.
Shackled and bound, the coldly vigilant frost
Stiffens all rivers, and with eager power
Hardens each glebe. The wasted country owns
The keen despotic vehemence of the North ;
And, with the resignation that obtains
Where he is weak and powerless, man awaits
Under God's mercy, the dissolvent thaw.

O All-beholding, All-informing God
Invisible, and ONLY through effects
Known and belov'd, unshackle the waste earth !
Soul of the incomplete vitality
In atom and in man ! Soul of all Worlds !
Leave not Thy glory vacant, nor afflict
With fear and hunger, man whom Thou hast made.
Thou from Thy chambers waterest the earth ;
Thou givest snow like wool ; and scatterest wide
Hoarfrost like ashes. Casting forth Thy ice
Like morsels, who can stand before Thy cold ?
Thou sendest forth Thy word, and lo ! they melt ;
Causing Thy wind to blow, the waters flow.

Soon the frozen air receives the subtle thaw :
And suddenly a crawling mist, with rain
Impregn'd, the damp day dims, and drizzling drops
Proclaim a change. At night across the heavens
Swift-journeying, and by a furious wind
Squadron'd, the hurrying clouds range the roused sky
Magnificently sombrous. The wan moon
Amazed, gleams often through a cloudy rack,
Then, shuddering, hides. One earnest wakeful star

Of living sapphire drooping by her side,
A faithful spirit in her lone despair,
Outshines the cloudy tempest. Then the shower
Falls ceaseless, and night murmurs with the rain.
And in the sounding morning what a change !
The meadows shine new-washed ; while here and there
A dusky patch of snow in shelter'd paths
Melts lonely. The awakened forest waves
With boughs unplumed. The white investiture
Of the fair earth hath vanished, and the hills
That in the evening sunset glowed with rose
And ineffectual baptism of gold,
Shine tawdry, crawled upon by the blind rain.
Now Luggie thunders down the ringing vale,
Tawnily brown, wide-leaving yellow sand
Upon the meadow. The South-West, aroused,
Blustering in moody kindness, clears the sky
To its blue depths by a full wingèd wind,
Blowing the diapason of red March.

THE YELLOWHAMMER.

DAVID GRAY.

IN fairy glen of Woodilee,
One sunny summer morning,
I plucked a little birchen tree,
The spongy moss adorning ;
And bearing it delighted home,
I planted it in garden loam,
Where, perfecting all duty,
It flowered in tassel'd beauty.

When delicate April in each dell
Was silently completing
Her ministry in bud and bell,
To grace the summer's meeting ;
My birchen tree of glossy rind
Determined not to be behind ;
So with a subtle power
The buds began to flower.

And I could watch from out my house
The twigs with leaflets thicken ;
From glossy rind to twining boughs
The milky sap 'gan quicken.
And when the fragrant form was green
No fairer tree was to be seen,
All Gartshore woods adorning,
Where doves are always mourning.

But never dove with liquid wing,
Or neck of changeful gleaming,
Came near my garden tree to sing
Or *croodle* out its meaning.
But this sweet day, an hour ago,
A yellowhammer, clear and low,
In love and tender pity
Thrilled out his dainty ditty.

And I was pleased, as you may think,
And blessed the little singer :
"O fly for your mate to Luggie brink,
Dear little bird ! and bring her ;
And build your nest among the boughs,
A sweet and cosy little house
Where ye may well content ye,
Since true love is so plenty.

"And when she sits upon her nest,
Here are cool shades to shroud her."
At this the singer sang his best,
O louder yet, and louder ;
Until I shouted in my glee,
His song had so enchanted me.
No nightingale could pant on
In joy so wise and wanton.

But at my careless noise he flew,
And if he chance to bring her
A happy bride the summer thro'
'Mong birchen boughs to linger,
I'll sing to you in numbers high
A summer song that shall not die,
But keep in memory clearly
The bird I love so dearly.

OCTOBER.

(A SELECTION.)

DAVID GRAY.

ERE the last stack is housed, and woods are bare,
And the vermilion fruitage of the brier
Is soaked in mist, or shrivelled up with frost ;
Ere warm Spring nests are coldly to be seen
Tenantless, but for rain and the cold snow,
While yet there is a loveliness abroad,—
The frail and indescribable loveliness
Of a fair form Life with reluctance leaves,
Being there only powerful,—while the earth
Wears sackcloth in her great prophetic grief :—

Then the reflective, melancholy soul,—
Aimlessly wandering with slow falling foot
The heath'ry solitude, in hope to assuage
The cunning humour of his malady,—
Loses his painful bitterness, and feels
His own specific sorrows one by one
Taken up in the hugedolour of all things.

O, the sweet melancholy of the time
When gently, ere the heart appeals, the year
Shines in the fatal beauty of decay !
When the sun sinks enlarged on Carronben,
Nakedly visible, without a cloud,
And faintly from the faint eternal blue
(That dim, sweet harebell-colour) comes the star
Which evening wears ;—when Luggie flows in mist,
And in the cottage windows, one by one,
With sudden twinkle household lamps are lit,—
What noiseless falling of the faded leaf !

THE HAREBELL.

DAVID GRAY.

BENEATH a hedge of thorn, and near
Where Bothlin steals through light and shadow
I saw its bell, so blue and clear—
That little beauty of the meadow.

It was a modest, tender flower—
So clearly blue, so sweetly tender ;
No simpler offspring of the shower
And sunshine may July engender.

The “azure harebell,” Shakspeare says—
And such a half-transparent azure
Was never seen in country ways
By poet in creative leisure.

But chiefly the belovèd song—
The patriot ballad, fresh and olden—
The “Scottish Blue Bells,” rose among
Some other memories, pure and golden.

And chiming o’er one verse of power,
While in the chalice fondly peering,
A tear-drop fell upon the flower—
My blessing earnest and enduring.

The prize was mine !—but no, ah ! no—
To spare it was a poet’s duty ;
So in that spot I let it blow,
And left it in its lonely beauty

IN THE SHADOWS.

A POEM IN SONNETS.

DAVID GRAY.

I.

IF it must be ; if it must be, O God !
That I die young, and make no further moans ;
That, underneath the unrespective sod,
In unescutcheoned privacy, my bones
Shall crumble soon,—then give me strength to bear
The last convulsive throe of too sweet breath !
I tremble from the edge of life, to dare
The dark and fatal leap, having no faith,
No glorious yearning for the Apocalypse ;
But, like a child that in the night-time cries
For light, I cry ; forgetting the eclipse
Of knowledge and our human destinies.
O peevish and uncertain soul ! obey
The law of life in patience till the Day.

II.

“Whom the gods love die young.” The thought is old,
And yet it soothed the sweet Athenian mind.
I take it with all pleasure, overbold,
Perhaps, yet to its virtue much inclined
By an inherent love for what is fair.
This is the utter poetry of woe—
That the bright-flashing gods should cure despair
By love, and make youth precious here below.
I die, being young ; and, dying, could become
A pagan, with the tender Grecian trust.

Let death, the fell anatomy, benumb

The hand that writes, and fill my mouth with dust—
Chant no funereal theme, but, with a choral
Hymn, O ye mourners ! hail immortal youth auroral !

III.

With the tear-worthy four, consumption killed
In youthful prime, before the nebulous mind
Had its symmetric shapeliness defined,
Had its transcendent destiny fulfilled.—

May future ages grant me gracious room,
With Pollok, in the voiceless solitude

Finding his holiest rapture, happiest mood ;
Poor White for ever poring o'er the tomb ;

With Keats, whose lucid fancy mounting far
Saw heaven as an intenser, a more keen
Redintegration of the Beauty seen

And felt by all the breathers on this star ;
With gentle Bruce, flinging melodious blame
Upon the Future for an uncompleted name.

MY EPITAPH.

SEPTEMBER 27th, 1861.

DAVID GRAY.

BELOW lies one whose name was traced in sand.
He died, not knowing what it was to live :
Died, while the first sweet consciousness of manhood
And maiden thought electrified his soul,
Faint beatings in the calyx of the rose.
Bewildered reader ! pass without a sigh,
In a proud sorrow ! There is life with God,
In other kingdom of a sweeter air ;
In Eden every flower is blown : Amen.

Herman Charles Merivale.

1839.

HERMAN CHARLES MERIVALE, poet, dramatist, and novelist, is the only son of the late Herman Merivale, sometime permanent Under-Secretary of State for the Colonies, and subsequently for India. He was born in London, January 27th, 1839, and was educated at Harrow and Oxford. Called to the Bar in 1864, a member of the Inner Temple, Mr. Merivale practised in the Western Circuit, and afterwards in the Privy Council on Indian Appeals. He served also upon the Boundary Commission, created by the Reform Act of 1867. The legal profession, however, never wholly possessed Mr. Merivale's active spirit, nor at any time entirely controlled his natural impulse towards literature. For some ten years, up till 1880, he edited the *Annual Register*, which charge he gave up, together with his legal practice, owing to ill-health. From this date Mr. Merivale's work has been almost continuously literary, and in at least three directions that work has brought him fame. At the outset of his career the stage and its literature were potent influences with him, and he early displayed gifts in dramatic criticism which might have proved notable in literary results if he had not been inspired to choose the creative branch of dramatic literature. No period in the history of the English drama

was more barren of original native work than that which witnessed the production of "All for Her," Mr. Merivale's first play, written in conjunction with Mr. Palgrave Simpson, and produced in 1874. It was a depressing season, a dramatic "winter of pale misfeature," that marked the advent of this powerful and pathetic drama, a drama which surprised the town and the critics alike, by its originality of conception and its craftsmanlike qualities of construction and invention. There was a prevailing notion among playwrights and critics at that time that the stage had done with poets and with men of letters. Shakespeare was supposed to spell bankruptcy, and the "poetical drama" was mysteriously regarded as something alien to the theatre, something beautiful, perchance, yet wholly impracticable, something suitable for the study, but not for the stage, and those who had bewailed the divorce of poetry and the drama on the stage could not but welcome the appearance of a writer who was a playwright, in the Elizabethan sense of the word, and not a playwright, after the current Victorian manner. There were some sanguine spirits who hoped that this play was the prelude to more gracious times, and of good augury for the future of the British drama. Yet despite the first successes of Mr. Merivale and his subsequent production of work not less striking than "All for Her," the poetic drama remains in very much the same position to-day, and no manager has been tempted to produce Mr. Merivale's "Florien," although it is an excellent example of that deft combination of the qualities of the literary artist and of stagecraft which is the dramatist's distinction.

In 1879 Mr. Merivale produced "Forget Me Not," a play which none can forget who attended its representation, and few can now read without desiring its revival. In 1882 appeared "The Cynic;" in 1883 "Fédora," an adaptation after M. Sardou, "Our Joan," and "The White Pilgrim;" and in 1884 "Florien." The production of "Ravenswood," in the year 1890, at the Lyceum Theatre, though admittedly as a dramatic version of Scott, a task of difficulty, showed a mastership of literary art and stage craftsmanship which is in every way admirable. Mr. Merivale's chief works in fiction are "Faucit of Balliol" (1882), and "Binko's Blues," a Fairy Tale (1884).

Perhaps, the despondent views expressed by Mr. Merivale, in the preface to "The White Pilgrim," on the incompatibility of "literary qualities" with the popular stage, are only too well supported by the experience of others. The stage has tempted some of the greatest poets of the century to offer dramatic tribute, but with how small a measure of stage success. To go back no further, practical contributors to the theatre of the Victorian period may be cited in the late Lord Lytton, Robert Browning, Westland Marston, and Lord Tennyson. Yet of their works the "Lady of Lyons" alone keeps the stage. Sheridan Knowles—though some would deny him the title of poet—wrote dramas in poetic form, and was successful with the public to a remarkable degree. But the later followers of the poetic drama have not been equally successful. Doubtless, the failure of the poetic drama in our time is largely due to the altered conditions of life. The average playgoer seeks amusement, and he is

satisfied to obtain it with the least possible cost to himself. The audience has changed. Not only is it absolutely different from that of Elizabethan times, but it is different from that of Kean's day, when the house was filled with critics other than the professional representatives of the press. To be amused at the smallest expense of intellectual effort is a necessity created by the feverish competition of modern life ; hence the popularity of the burlesque, the comic opera, and the variety entertainment.

From the volume that includes "Florien" several examples of Mr. Merivale's lyrical poetry are quoted in the following pages. Among these is one of five lyrics, written for a musical arrangement by Mr. John Coleman of Shakespeare's *Pericles*, all of which possess not merely a rare degree of dramatic propriety, but express with singular felicity the spirit of the Elizabethan lyric. "Thaïsa's Dirge" might, indeed, pass as a "Song from the Dramatists," and is worthy of association with the pathetic scene for which it was designed. From the same volume are selected "Across the Estuary," "A Lost Morning," and the sonnet, "The Sunset Winter." From the earlier volume, "The White Pilgrim and Other Poems," are given "Old and New Rome," "Ætate XIX," and the speech of Death from "The White Pilgrim."

J. A. BLAIKIE.

THE WHITE PILGRIM.

1883.

HERMAN CHARLES MERIVALE.

THE SPEECH OF DEATH.

(FROM ACT II.)

Thordisa in the agony of lost love calls upon death (The White Pilgrim) to end her woes. The Spirit appears to her.

Thordisa. Spirit, I know thee not. I look on thee
With awe, but not with terror. All my fears
Fall from me as a garment. Art thou—

Pilgrim.

Hush!

Miscall me not! Men have miscalled me much;
Have given harsh names and harsher thoughts to me,
Reviled and evilly entreated me,
Built me strange temples as an unknown God,
Then called me idol, devil, unclean thing,
And to rude insult bowed my godhead down.
Miscall me not! for men have marred my form,
And in the earth-born grossness of their thought
Have coldly modelled me of their own clay,
Then fear to look on that themselves have made.
Miscall me not! ye know not what I am,
But ye shall see me face to face, and know.

I take all sorrows from the sorrowful,
And teach the joyful what it is to joy.
I gather in my land-locked harbour's clasp,
The shattered vessels of a vexèd world,

And even the tiniest ripple upon life
Is, to my calm sublime, as tropic storm.
When other leech-craft fails the breaking brain,
I, only, own the anodyne to still
Its eddies into visionless repose.
The face, distorted with life's latest pang,
I smoothe, in passing, with an angel wing ;
And from beneath the quiet eyelids steal
The hidden glory of the eyes, to give
A new and nobler beauty to the rest.
Belie me not ; the plagues that walk the Earth,
The wasting pain, the sudden agony,
Famine, and War, and Pestilence, and all
The terrors that have darkened round my name,
These are the works of Life, they are not mine ;
Vex when I tarry, vanish when I come,
Instantly melting into perfect peace,
As at His word, whose master-spirit I am,
The troubled waters slept on Galilee.

Tender I am, not cruel : when I take
The shape most hard to human eyes, and pluck
The little baby-blossom yet unblown,
'Tis but to graft it on a kindlier stem,
And leaping o'er the perilous years of growth,
Unswapt of sorrow, and unscathed of wrong,
Clothe it at once with rich maturity.
'Tis I that give a soul to memory ;
For round the follics of the bad I throw
The mantle of a kind forgetfulness ;
But, canonised in dear Love's calendar,
I sanctify the good for evermore.
Miscall me not ! my generous fulness lends
Home to the homeless, to the friendless friends ;
To the starved babe, the mother's tender breast ;

Wealth to the poor, and to the restless—rest !

Shall I unveil, Thordisa ? If I do,
Then shall I melt at once the iron bonds
Of this mortality that fetters thee.
Gently, so gently, like a tired child,
Will I enfold thee. But thou mayst not look
Upon my face, and stay. In the busy haunts
Of human life, in the temple and the street,
And when the blood runs fullest in the veins,
Unseen, undreamed of, I am often by,
Divided from the giant in his strength
But by the thickness of this misty veil.
But none can look behind that veil, and stay.
Shall I withdraw it now ?

Thordisa.

A little while !

Give me a little yet ! Spirit, I love him
And would not go till I have heard once more
In accents whose rich music was the tune
To which my life was set, not that he loves me,
But that he loved me once. Spirit, not yet !
I am all too earthly in my thoughts of him ;
I am not fit for——

Pilgrim.

Hush ! Miscalld me not !

[*The SPIRIT disappears ; THORDISA
remains prostrate.*]

SONNETS.

I.—THE SUNSET WINTER.

Eastbourne, 1883.

WEARING Aurora's robe, night after night,
Some radiant spirit rules the western sky,
Drowning the sun-tints with such rich supply
Of colours weaved of unremembered light,
That it would seem the Master-painter's might
Had wrought anew His palette there on high,
To tell the tired world rainbows shall not die,
Which first His pledge of promise did indite.
Forged newly like a steel-blue scimitar,
The crescent Moon shines keener than of old,
And, as the drawn sword of one armed for war,
Marshals those hosts of crimson, green, and gold,
Till underneath the quiet Evening Star
The great review pales out into the cold.

II.—THAÏSA'S DIRGE.

(FROM "LYRICS OF PERICLES.")

THAÏSA fair, under the cold sea lying,
Sleeps the long sleep denied to her by Earth;
We, adding sighs unto the wild winds' sighing,
With all our mourning under-mourn her worth:
The white waves toss their crested plumes above her,
Round sorrowing faces with the salt spray wet,
All are her lovers that once learned to love her,
And never may remember to forget:
Shells for her pillow Amphitrite bringeth,
And sad nymphs of the dank weed weave her shroud:
Old Triton's horn her dirge to Ocean singeth,
Whose misty caverns swell the echo loud:
And, while the tides rock to and fro her bier,
What was Thaïsa lies entombèd here.

ÆTATE XIX.

HERMAN CHARLES MERIVALE.

NINETEEN ! of years a pleasant number ;
And it were well
If on his post old Time would slumber
For Isabel :

If he would leave her, fair and girlish,
Untouched of him,
Forgetting once his fashions churlish
Just for a whim !

But no, not he ; ashore, aboard ship,
Sleep we, or wake,
He lays aside his right of lordship
For no man's sake ;

But all untiring girds his loins up
For great and small ;
And as a miser sums his coins up,
Still counts us all.

As jealous as a nine-days' lover,
He will not spare,
'Spite of the wealth his presses cover,
One silver hair ;

But writes his wrinkles far and near in
Life's every page,
With ink invisible, made clear in
The fire of age.

Child! while the treacherous flame yet shines not
On thy smooth brow,
Where even Envy's eye divines not
That writing now,

In this brief homily I read you
There should be found
Some wholesome moral, that might lead you
To look around,

And think how swift, as sunlight passes
Into the shade,
The pretty picture in your glass is
Foredoomed to fade.

But, 'faith, the birthday genius quarrels
With moral rhyme,
And I was never good at morals
At any time ;

While with ill omens to alarm you
'Twere vain to try ;
To show how little mine should harm you,
Your mother's by !

And what can Time hurt me, I pray, with,
If he insures
Such friends to laugh regrets away with
As you—and yours ?

OLD AND NEW ROME.

EASTER 1869.

HERMAN CHARLES MERIVALE.

WHAT came we forth to see ? a fair or race ?
Some hero fêted by an eager crowd ?
Or would we do some favoured princeling grace,
That thus we herd so close, and talk so loud ?

Pushing and struggling, fighting, crushing, shouting,
What are these motley gazers here to seek,
Like merry-makers on a summer outing ?
'Tis but the services of Holy Week.

The Eternal City swarms with eager strangers
From every quarter of the busy earth ;
Who fill the temples like the money-changers,
And say some prayers—for what they may be worth.

In never-ending tide of restless motion,
They come to burn, in fashion rather odd,
The incense of their polyglot devotion,
Before the altars of the Latin God.

As flock the Londoners to Epsom Races,
Or form a "queue" to see the newest play,
So do the pilgrim-tourists fight for places
Before the chapels in their zeal to pray.

From holy place to holy place they flit,
To "do" as many churches as they can ;
And humbly kneeling, for the fun of it,
They climb the ladder of the Lateran.

Here some fair maid, her Heavenward journey steering
Where by Swiss bayonets the way is barred,
Nor Law, nor Pope, nor Antonelli fearing—
Breaks through the lines of the astonished guard.

In customary suit of solemn black,
With string of beads and veil à l'*Espagnole*,
She means to "see it all ;" to keep her back
Would be to peril her immortal soul.

There a slim youth, while all but he are kneeling,
Through levelled opera-glass looks down on them,
When round the Sistine's pictured roof is pealing
Our buried Lord's majestic Requiem.

For him each storied wonder of the globe is
"The sort of thing a fellow ought to see ;"
And so he patronised *Ora pro nobis*,
And wanted to encore the *Tenebræ*.

Stranger ! what though these sounds and sights be grandest
Of all that on Earth's surface can be found ?
Remember that the place whereon thou standest,
Be thy creed what it may, is holy ground.

Yet I have gaped and worshipped with the rest—
I, too, beneath St. Peter's lofty dome
Have seen, in all their richest colours dressed,
The golden glories of historic Rome ;

Have heard the Pontiff's ringing voice bestow,
'Mid cheering multitudes and flags unfurled,
Borne by the canon of St. Angelo,
His blessing on the "City and the World ;"

Have seen—and thrilled with wonder as I gazed—
Ablaze with living lines of golden light,
Like some fire-throne to the Eternal raised,
The great Basilica burn through the night ;

Have heard the trumpet-notes of Easter Day,
Their silver echoes circling all around,
In strange unearthly music float away,
Stones on the lake translated into sound ;—

Yet would I wander from the crowd apart,
While heads were bowed and tuneful voices sang,
And through the deep recesses of my heart
A still small voice in solemn warning rang.

"Oh, vanity of vanities ! ye seem
Ye pomps and panoplies of mortal state,
To make this text the matter of your theme,
That God is little, and that Man is great.

"Is this parade of the world's wealth and splendour
The lesson of the simple Gospel-word ?
Is this the sacrifice of self-surrender
Taught by the lowly followers of the Lord ?

"Do we, who broider thus the garment's hem,
Think of the swaddling clothes the child had on ?
Grace we the casket, to neglect the gem ?
Forget we quite the manger for the throne ?"

* * . * * *

While thus in moralising mood I pondered,
I turned me from the hum of men alone ;
And, as my vagrant fancy led me, wandered
Amid the maze of monumented stone.

The crowd their favourite lions now forswore,
Left galleries and ruins in the lurch ;
The cicerone's glory was no more,
For all the world was gathered in the church.

So at my will I strayed from place to place,
From classic shrines to modern studios—
Now musing spell-bound, where Our Lady's ¹ face
In nameless godhead from the canvas glows.

Now, from the still Campagna's desolate rise,
I saw the hills with jealous clasp enfold
The lingering sunlight, while the seaward skies
Paled slowly round the melting disc of gold ;

Now gazed, ere yet on dome and tower had died
 The glory of the Roman afterglow,
 Over the map-like city lying wide,
 Half-dreaming, from the Monte Mario.

Traveller, do thou the like ; and would'st thou learn
 How Rome her faithful votaries enthralls
 With all the memories that breathe and burn
 Within the magic circle of her walls,

Leave pomp of man and track of guide-led tourist,
 And drink of history at the fountain-head ;
 For living minds and living things are poorest
 In that vast mausoleum of the dead.

There, where the stately Barberini pile
 Like some new Nimrod's fabric heav'nward climbs,
 Enduring monument of Christian guile,
 By outrage wrested from the Pagan times ;²

Where lulled and drowsy with the distant hum,
 The sentinel keeps watch upon the town,
 And from the heights of old Janiculum
 On Father Tiber's yellow face looks down ;

Where in their southern grace the moonbeams play
 On Caracalla's tessellated floors,
 And rescue from the garish light of day
 The Colosseum's ghostly corridors ;

Where Raphael and all his great compeers
Art's form Divine in giant-mould have cast,
The very air is heavy with the years,
The very stones are vocal of the past.

Still, as we saunter down the crowded street,
On our own thoughts intent, and plans, and pleasures
For miles and miles, beneath our idle feet,
Rome buries from the day yet unknown treasures.

The whole world's alphabet, in every line
Some stirring page of history she recalls;
Her Alpha is the Prison Mamertine,
Her Omega, St. Paul's without the Walls.

Above, beneath, around, she weaves her spells,
And ruder hands unweave them all in vain:
Who once within her fascination dwells,
Leaves her with but one thought—to come again.

So cast thy obol into Trevi's fountain—
Drink of its waters—and, returning home,
Pray that by land or sea, by lake or mountain,
"All roads alike may lead at last to Rome."

¹ The Madonna of Foligno.

² "Quod non fecerunt barbari, fecerunt Barberini."

"ACROSS THE ESTUARY."

HERMAN CHARLES MERIVALE.

Portlemouth, S. Devon, 1883.

VAGUE sounds are stirring in the outer world,
Which wake an echo in the world within me ;
The frowning mists across the valley hurled
To saddened musings by the casement win me :
And on my rushing thoughts are borne along
The waves of sudden and unpurposed song.

But now, the Sun painted in artist-splendour
The varied outlines of the sea and shore ;
The sloping woods were bathed in hues so tender,
That master's canvas ne'er such glories wore ;
Yet where enrobed in purple gold shone they,
Now spreads a monotone of lifeless gray.

The great Enchanter's momentary wand
Darkens the landscape and the mind as one ;
The headlands face me o'er the bay beyond
Robbed both of us together of our sun ;
And out of unguessed caverns creeps the rain,
To touch the spirit with a nameless pain.

Yon white and flickering sail, which flashed but now
Across the bright waves blue as Brenda's eyes,
Droops wet and wearied o'er the vessel's prow
On hueless wastes caught by a swift surprise,
Which clouds engendered of the vaporous sea
Bring o'er the startled scene to master me.

Like beacons on the world's uncertain course,
Fair homes set gem-like in the further trees
Seemed whispering of untired Love's quiet force,
A silver girdle linking ours to these ;
And for Home's message to that shore from this,
The lapping waters bore a greeting kiss.

But now—and so but now—Life seemed to wear
High purpose for a marriage-robe of power,
And all her pulses and her will to share
The sun-enkindled promise of the hour ;
Till, as the mist wraps the far shore from view,
It falls as heavy on my spirit too.

Is this, then, Life ? its pledges sharply broken,
Even at their fairest and most golden link ;
Do they the fate of rosy dreams betoken,
Those emerald ripples turned to sullen ink ?
And were it wiser anchorless to roam,
Than nail high hopes to the frail walls of Home ?

Off with such burrs of thought ! the very spell
Which bids me throw these fancies on the page
Awakes new chords and brighter songs to swell
The happy burden of on-coming age,
And Cloudland's fretful shapes to soar above
To the fixed firmament of God and Love.

Out and beyond the steady light is shining,
Which from the steady heart no mist can veil,
Bright beyond man's divinest of divining,
Where all his mists of thought must melt and fail,
And, as e'en now the clouds roll off the shore,
Obscure the homes of promise nevermore.

A LOST MORNING.

HERMAN CHARLES MERIVALE,

Eastbourne, 1884.

O H, foolish world ! The writer's necromancy
At times is powerless on the restive pen ;
And the blank page reflects the lagging fancy,
Which has no message then.

The honest schoolboy, of his cricket dreaming,
Could trace no ruder figures o'er the slate
Than those which yield my brain, with Nothing teeming,
Outlet articulate.

My tale of work, in well-considered order,
Lies fair before me on the laden desk ;
But nothing in me speaks, save dreams that border
The grave with the grotesque.

Plans jotted down for many-sided labour,
Invite in turn from various pigeon-holes,
Where the next story has some play for neighbour,
Stocked with imagined souls.

Yet spite of Will (o'er which men make such pother),
I cannot call one spirit from the deep,
Where all the thoughts, which crowded each on other
Like very Merlin sleep.

Is it the sweet and heavy hum of Summer,
Full charged with the mesmeric scent of thyme,
That, through my window an unbidden comer,
Dissolves them into rhyme ?

Is it the Sun, in his new kingdom sharing
 The message of pure luxury with me,
 Which to the footsteps of his throne is bearing
 The murmur of the sea?—

And whispering, "Rest thee, over-anxious mortal,
 Awhile oblivious of the world's commands,
 Content to offer at my golden portal
 A chaplet from thy hands.

"E'en weave it as thou wilt; thy garden musters
 Mute hints of ditties to inspire the lute;
 And to thy lips and sense stoop mingled clusters
 Of glowing flower and fruit.

"Bring me no ode of an heroic measure;
 Tell me no tale; seek no satiric theme;
 But merely babble, out of very pleasure
 Thine unconnected dream."

* * * * *

What could I answer? All the heat was singing,
 The insect chorus hummed in undertone;
 Slow to my feet my mighty dog was bringing
 A too-exacting bone.

So happy in mere happiness of living,
 I let the hours slip unimproved by,
 And, past the hope of cultured man's forgiving,
 Thus "*diem perdidit*."

So have I writ lines that begin and end not,
 An idle morning's thriftless castaway;
 For whence they came, and whither tend or tend not,
 Critic! 'tis thine to say.

Austin Dobson.

1840.

HENRY AUSTIN DOBSON was born at Plymouth in the year 1840, and was educated partly in England and partly on the continent. In 1856 he accepted a clerkship at the Board of Trade, and in 1868 was presented at the Court of Literature by Anthony Trollope, who found space for some of his earlier efforts in the *St. Paul's Magazine*. In 1873, Mr. Dobson collected his scattered verses, and published them with others in book form, under the title of "Vignettes in Rhyme, and Vers de Soci  t  ," a volume which was welcomed alike by the public and the press. In 1877 "Proverbs in Porcelain" appeared, in which the poet made a most successful attempt to acclimatise the old French forms, which have since become so popular with the younger generation of English versifiers. Mr. Dobson's position among the poets of the day now became more defined. Though free from anything like imitation, the influence of Prior, Praed, Locker, and Alfred de Musset, was said to be traceable in his writings, while in tone his poetry was declared less hearty than that of Mr. Frederick Locker, but more delicate and graceful. In 1883 "Old-World Idylls" appeared. The *Athen  um*, in reviewing this work, defined the Old World to which the Idylls belong, as dating

from 1650 to 1720, and ranging from Abraham Cowley to Matthew Prior, and went on to say: "Mr. Dobson's work, so far as it is true to the Old World, whence it gets its vital heat, resembles the poetry of the Restoration in its excellencies and its defects. It has the same sportiveness, the same jocular solemnity, even let us say a suspicion of the same epicureanism, and, together with these, it has the same love of point, and the same subordination of purely poetical qualities to intellectual acuteness." In reviewing Mr. Dobson's next book, "At the Sign of the Lyre," in 1885, the same journal paid the following high tribute to the excellent finish of his work:—"Of its kind it is as nearly as possible perfect. One thinks of Horace as one reads, and one thinks of our own eighteenth century poets, to whom Horace was an inspiration and an example. The epithet is usually so just that it seems to have come into being with the noun it qualifies, the metaphor is usually so appropriate that it leaves one in doubt as to whether it suggested the poem or the poem suggested it, the verb is seldom in excess of the idea it would convey, the effect is that 'something has here got itself uttered,' and that once for all." Mr. John Addington Symonds, writing in *The Academy*, says of this volume, "Only a churl, or one indifferent to what is delicate in literature, could find words of censure for this collection of graceful lyrics, so exquisitely finished, with accomplished art, so characteristic of the author's genius in the subtle blending of gentle pathos and light humour, so just in criticism both of manners and of letters, so marked by solid English sense amid the refinement of highly studied

versification and the quaintness of scholarly archaisms."

The qualities that gained for Mr. Dobson's verse early and hearty recognition on both sides of the Atlantic, still exercise their fascination, and it is difficult to think that they can ever lose their charm. These are a delicacy that is dainty without being fastidious, a refinement that is attained without any loss of vigour, a gaiety that is never frivolous, a humour that is never coarse, and a pathos truly felt, but ever held in wise restraint. It would seem in the light of his own rondeau, "In After Days," as though the poet had been fascinated by the laughing lilt of his poetic parents of the old time and had determined to revive their grace, without their grossness, to show equal wit in the treatment of less questionable themes, and to add purity of thought to purity of form and style. Having done this, he lays his triumphs at the feet of English girlhood, in the true spirit of chivalry, and writes in his dedication of the "Old-World Idylls,"

"But most to you with eyelids pure,
Scarce witting yet of love or lure;—
To you with bird-like glances bright,
Half paused to speak, half poised in flight;—
O English Girl, divine, demure,
To you I sing!"

Mr. Dobson has a clear perception of the limits of his true sphere, but within these limits he has produced a substantial body of verse which is the very best of its kind. He has a perfect mastery of metrical art, and a rare perception of the felicitous appropriateness of sign and symbol, thought and word, idea and illustration. His English is of the

period of his subject, be it seventeenth, eighteenth, or nineteenth century, and though simple and direct has the rare power of suggestion which revives the atmosphere of the old world with its local colour and aroma, until its characters seem not so much to move before us, as in and out amongst us, while we breathe with them their native air. The characters, moreover, are not mere dainty dolls destitute of human interest, for short as many of his poems are, there are few of them that do not interest us sufficiently in the characters they delineate to make us wish we knew more about them. There is here much more than the power of writing fashionable verse. There is a vital heat in much of it that lifts it into a higher and healthier region.

That the humanising tendencies of the century have affected "society," and will continue to do so, is doubtless true; and that we should expect a deeper tone from the modern writer of society verse than we find in the work of his lyric progenitors follows. Of the "society" whose fine manners are the expression of true hearts, and whose culture is the grace of art added to the strength of nature, it would be no indignity to call Mr. Dobson laureate. He is the foremost representative of a class of poetry which is a development of our time, which gives lyric expression to the lighter moods of thoughtful minds, and the graver feelings of light hearts. His contributions to prose literature include, the volume on "Fielding," in the "English Men of Letters" series; that on "Hogarth," in the "Biographies of Great Artists;" and that on "Steele," in the series of "English Worthies."

ALFRED H. MILES.

OLD-WORLD IDYLLS.

AUSTIN DOBSON.

I.

A DEAD LETTER.

"A cœur blessé—l'ombre et le silence."

H. DE BALZAC.

I.

I DREW it from its china tomb ;—
It came out feebly scented
With some thin ghost of past perfume
That dust and days had lent it.

An old, old letter,—folded still !
To read with due composure,
I sought the sun-lit window-sill,
Above the gray enclosure,

That glimmering in the sultry haze,
Faint-flowered, dimly shaded,
Slumbered like Goldsmith's Madam Blaize,
Bedizened and brocaded.

A queer old place ! You'd surely say
Some tea-board garden-maker
Had planned it in Dutch William's day
To please some florist Quaker,

So trim it was. The yew-trees still,
With pious care perverted,
Grew in the same grim shapes ; and still
The lipless dolphin spurted ;

Still in his wonted state abode
The broken-nosed Apollo ;
And still the cypress-arbour showed
The same umbrageous hollow.

Only,—as fresh young Beauty gleams
From coffee-coloured laces,—
So peeped from its old-fashioned dreams
The fresher modern traces ;

For idle mallet, hoop, and ball
Upon the lawn were lying ;
A magazine, a tumbled shawl,
Round which the swifts were flying ;

And, tossed beside the Guelder rose,
A heap of rainbow knitting,
Where, blinking in her pleased repose,
A Persian cat was sitting.

“A place to love in,—live,—for aye,
If we too, like Tithonus,
Could find some God to stretch the gray,
Scant life the Fates have thrown us ;

“But now by steam we run our race,
With buttoned heart and pocket ;
Our Love’s a gilded, surplus grace,—
Just like an empty locket !

“ ‘The time is out of joint.’ Who will,
May strive to make it better ;
For me, this warm old window-sill,
And this old dusty letter.”

II.

"Dear *John* (the letter ran), it can't, can't be,
For Father's gone to *Chorley Fair* with *Sam*,
And Mother's storing Apples,—*Prue* and Me
Up to our Elbows making Damson Jam :
But we shall meet before a Week is gone,—
'Tis a long Lane that has no Turning,' *John* !

"Only till Sunday next, and then you'll wait
Behind the White-Thorn, by the broken Stile—
We can go round and catch them at the Gate,
All to Ourselves, for nearly one long Mile ;
Dear *Prue* won't look, and Father he'll go on,
And *Sam*'s two Eyes are all for *Cissy*, *John* !

"*John*, she's so smart,—with every Ribbon new,
Flame-coloured Sack, and Crimson Padesoy :
As proud as proud ; and has the Vapours too,
Just like My Lady ;—calls poor *Sam* a Boy,
And vows no Sweet-heart's worth the Thinking-on
Till he's past Thirty. . . . I know better, *John* !

"My Dear, I don't think that I thought of much
Before we knew each other, I and you ;
And now, why, *John*, your least, least Finger-touch,
Gives me enough to think a Summer through.
See, for I send you Something ! There, 'tis gone !
Look in this corner,—mind you find it, *John* !"

III.

This was the matter of the note,—
A long-forgot deposit,
Dropped in an Indian dragon's throat,
Deep in a fragrant closet,

Piled with a dapper Dresden world,—
Beaux, beauties, prayers, and poses,—
Bonzes with squat legs undercurled,
And great jars filled with roses.

Ah, heart that wrote ! Ah, lips that kissed !
You had no thought or presage
Into what keeping you dismissed
Your simple old-world message !

A reverent one. Though we to-day
Distrust beliefs and powers,
The artless, ageless things you say
Are fresh as May's own flowers,

Starring some pure primeval spring,
Ere Gold had grown despotic,—
Ere Life was yet a selfish thing,
Or Love a mere exotic !

I need not search too much to find
Whose lot it was to send it,
That feel upon me yet the kind,
Soft hand of her who penned it ;

And see, through two score years of smoke,
In by-gone, quaint apparel,
Shine from yon time-black Norway oak
The face of Patience Caryl,—

The pale, smooth forehead, silver-tressed ;
The gray gown, primly flowered ;
The spotless, stately coif whose crest
Like Hector's horse-plume towered ;

And still the sweet half-solemn look
Where some past thought was clinging,
As when one shuts a serious book
To hear the thrushes singing.

I kneel to you ! Of those you were,
Whose kind old hearts grow mellow,—
Whose fair old faces grow more fair
As Point and Flanders yellow ;

Whom some old store of garnered grief,
Their placid temples shading,
Crowns like a wreath of autumn leaf
With tender tints of fading.

Peace to your soul ! You died unwed—
Despite this loving letter.
And what of John ? The less that's said
Of John, I think, the better.

II.

THE BALLAD OF "BEAU BROCADE."

"Hark! I hear the sound of coaches!"

BEGGAR'S OPERA.

SEVENTEEN hundred and thirty-nine :—
That was the date of this tale of mine.

First great GEORGE was buried and gone ;
GEORGE the Second was plodding on.

LONDON then, as the "Guides" aver,
Shared its glories with *Westminster* ;

And people of rank, to correct their "tone,"
Went out of town to *Marybone*.

Those were the days of the War with *Spain*,
PORTO-BELLO would soon be ta'en ;

WHITEFIELD preached to the colliers grim,
Bishops in lawn sleeves preached at him ;

WALPOLE talked of "a man and his price ;"
Nobody's virtue was over-nice :—

Those, in fine, were the brave days when
Coaches were stopped by . . . *Highwaymen* !

And of all the knights of the gentle trade
Nobody bolder than "BEAU BROCADE."

This they knew on the whole way down ;
Best,—maybe,—at the "*Oak and Crown*."

(For timorous cits on their pilgrimage
Would "club" for a "Guard" to ride the stage ;

And the Guard that rode on more than one
Was the Host of this hostel's sister's son.)

Open we here on a March-day fine,
Under the oak with the hanging sign.

There was Barber DICK with his basin by ;
Cobbler JOE with the patch on his eye ;

Portly product of Beef and Beer,
JOHN the host, he was standing near.

Straining and creaking, with wheels awry
Lumbering came the "*Plymouth Fly* ;"—

Lumbering up from *Bagshot Heath*,
Guard in the basket armed to the teeth ;

Passengers heavily armed inside ;
Not the less surely the coach had been tried !

Tried !—but a couple of miles away,
By a well-dressed man !—in the open day !

Tried successfully, never a doubt,—
Pockets of passengers all turned out !

Cloak-bags rifled, and cushions ripped,—
Even an Ensign's wallet stripped !

Even a Methodist hosier's wife
Offered the choice of her Money or Life !

Highwayman's manners no less polite,
Hoped that their coppers (returned) were right ;—

Sorry to find the company poor,
Hoped next time they'd travel with more ;—

Plucked them all at his ease, in short :—
Such was the "*Plymouth Fly's*" report.

Sympathy ! horror ! and wonderment !
"Catch the Villain !" (But Nobody went.)

Hosier's wife led into the Bar ;
(That's where the best strong waters are !)

Followed the tale of the hundred-and-one
Things that Somebody ought to have done.

Ensign (of BRAGG'S) made a terrible clangour :
But for the Ladies had drawn his hanger !

Robber, of course, was "BEAU BROCADE ;"
Out-spoke DOLLY the Chambermaid.

Devonshire DOLLY, plump and red,
Spoke from the gallery overhead ;—

Spoke it out boldly, staring hard :—
"Why didn't you shoot then, GEORGE the Guard ?"

Spoke it out bolder, seeing him mute :—
"GEORGE the Guard, why didn't you shoot ?"

Portly JOHN grew pale and red,
(JOHN was afraid of her, people said ;)

Gasped that "DOLLY was surely cracked,"
(JOHN was afraid of her—that's a fact !)

GEORGE the Guard grew red and pale,
Slowly finished his quart of ale :—

“Shoot ? Why—Rabbit him !—didn’t he shoot ?”
Muttered—“The Baggage was far too ‘cute !”

“Shoot ? Why he’d flashed the pan in his eye ?”
Muttered—“She’d pay for it by and by !”
Further than this made no reply.

Nor could a further reply be made,
For GEORGE was in league with “BEAU BROCADE” !

And JOHN the Host, in his wakefullest state,
Was not—on the whole—immaculate.

But nobody’s virtue was over-nice
When WALPOLE talked of “a man and his price ;”

And wherever Purity found abode,
’Twas certainly *not* on a posting road.

II.

“Forty” followed to “Thirty-nine.”
Glorious days of the *Hanover* line !

Princes were born, and drums were banged ;
Now and then batches of Highwaymen hanged.

“Glorious news !” from the *Spanish Main* ;
PORTO-BELLO at last was ta’en.

“Glorious news !”—for the liquor trade ;
Nobody dreamed of “BEAU BROCADE.”

People were thinking of *Spanish Crowns* ;
Money was coming from seaport towns !

Nobody dreamed of "BEAU BROCADE,"
(Only DOLLY the Chambermaid !)

Blessings on VERNON ! Fill up the cans ;
Money was coming in "*Flys*" and "*Vans*."

Possibly, JOHN the Host had heard ;
Also, certainly, GEORGE the Guard.

And DOLLY had possibly tidings, too,
That made her rise from her bed anew,

Plump as ever, but stern of eye,
With a fixed intention to warn the "*Fly*."

Lingering only at JOHN his door,
Just to make sure of a jerky snore ;

Saddling the grey mare, *Dumpling Star* ;
Fetching the pistol out of the bar ;

(The old horse-pistol that, they say,
Came from the battle of *Malplaquet* ;)

Loading with powder that maids would use,
Even in "Forty," to clear the flues ;

And a couple of silver buttons, the Squire
Gave her, away in *Devonshire*.

These she wadded—for want of better—
With the B—SH—P of L—ND—N's "Pastoral Letter" ;

Looked to the flint, and hung the whole,
Ready to use, at her pocket-hole.

Thus equipped and accoutred, DOLLY
Clattered away to "*Exciseman's Folly*" ;—

Such was the name of a ruined abode,
Just on the edge of the *London* road.

Thence she thought she might safely try,
As soon as she saw it, to warn the "*Fly*."

But, as chance fell out, her rein she drew,
As the BEAU came cantering into the view.

By the light of the moon she could see him drest
In his famous gold-sprigged tambour vest ;

And under his silver-gray surtout,
The laced, historical coat of blue,

That he wore when he went to *London-Spaw*,
And robbed Sir MUNGO MUCKLETHRAW.

Out-spoke DOLLY the Chambermaid,
(Trembling a little, but not afraid,)
"Stand and Deliver, O 'BEAU BROCADE'!"

But the BEAU rode nearer, and would not speak,
For he saw by the moonlight a rosy cheek ;

And a spavined mare with a rusty hide ;
And a girl with her hand at her pocket-side.

So never a word he spoke as yet,
For he thought 'twas a freak of MEG or BET ;—
A freak of the "*Rose*" or the "*Rummer*" set.

Out-spoke DOLLY the Chambermaid,
(Tremulous now, and sore afraid,)
"Stand and Deliver, O 'BEAU BROCADE'!"—

Firing then, out of sheer alarm,
Hit the BEAU in the bridle-arm.

Button the first went none knows where,
But it carried away his *solitaire* ;

Button the second a circuit made,
Glanced in under the shoulder blade ;—
Down from the saddle fell “*BEAU BROCADE*” !

Down from the saddle and never stirred !—
DOLLY grew white as a *Windsor* curd.

Slipped not less from the mare, and bound
Strips of her kirtle about his wound.

Then, lest his Worship should rise and flee,
Fettered his ankles—tenderly.

Jumped on his chestnut, BET the fleet
(Called after BET of *Portugal Street*) ;

Came like the wind to the old Inn-door ;—
Roused fat JOHN from a three-fold snore ;—

Vow'd she'd 'peach if he misbehaved. . . .
Briefly, the “*Plymouth Fly*” was saved !

Staines and *Windsor* were all on fire :—
DOLLY was wed to a *Yorkshire* squire ;
Went to Town at the K—G's desire !

But whether His M—J—STY saw her or not,
HOGARTH jotted her down on the spot ;

And something of DOLLY one still may trace
In the fresh contours of his “*Milkmaid's*” face.

GEORGE the Guard fled over the sea :
JOHN had a fit—of perplexity ;

Turned King's evidence, sad to state ;—
But JOHN was never immaculate.

As for the BEAU, he was duly tried,
When his wound was healed, at *Whitsuntide* ;

Served—for a day—as the last of " sights,"
To the world of *St. James's-Street* and "*White's*,"

Went on his way to TYBURN TREE,
With a pomp befitting his high degree.

Every privilege rank confers :—
Bouquet of pinks at *St. Sepulchre's* ;

Flagon of ale at *Holborn Bar* ;
Friends (in mourning) to follow his Car—
("t" is omitted where HEROES are !)

Every one knows the speech he made ;
Swore that he " rather admired the Jade ! "—

Waved to the crowd with his gold-laced hat ;
Talked to the chaplain after that ;

Turned to the Topsman undismayed. . . .
This was the finish of " BEAU BROCADE " !

*And this is the Ballad that seemed to hide
In the leaves of a dusty " LONDONER'S GUIDE " ;*

*" Humbly Inscrib'd " (with curls and tails)
By the Author to FREDERICK, Prince of WALES :—*

*" Published by FRANCIS and OLIVER PINE ;
Ludgate-Hill, at the Blackmoor Sign.
Seventeen-Hundred-and-Thirty-Nine."*

PROVERBS IN PORCELAIN.

AUSTIN DOBSON.

"GOOD-NIGHT, BABETTE!"

"*Si vieillesse pouvait !—*"

SCENE.—*A small neat Room. In a high Voltaire Chair sits a white-haired old Gentleman.*

MONSIEUR VIEUXBOIS.

BABETTE.

M. VIEUXBOIS (*turning querulously*).

DAY of my life ! Where *can* she get ?
BABETTE ! I say ! BABETTE !—BABETTE !

BABETTE (*entering hurriedly*).

Coming, M'sieu' ! If M'sieu' speaks
So loud, he won't be well for weeks !

M. VIEUXBOIS.

Where have you been ?

BABETTE.

Why M'sieu knows :—
April ! . . . Ville-d'Avray ! . . . Ma'am'selle ROSE !

M. VIEUXBOIS.

Ah ! I am old,—and I forget.
Was the place growing green, BABETTE ?

BABETTE.

But of a greenness !—yes, M'sieu' !
And then the sky so blue !—so blue !

And when I dropped my *immortelle*,
How the birds sang !

(*Lifting her apron to her eyes.*)

This poor Ma'am'selle !

M. VIEUXBOIS.

You're a good girl, BABETTE, but she,—
She was an Angel, verily.
Sometimes I think I see her yet
Stand smiling by the cabinet ;
And once, I know, she peeped and laughed
Betwixt the curtains . . .

Where's the draught ?

(*She gives him a cup.*)

Now I shall sleep, I think, BABETTE ;—
Sing me your Norman *chansonnette*.

BABETTE (*sings*).

" *Once at the Angelus*
(Ere I was dead),
Angels all glorious
Came to my Bed ;—
Angels in blue and white
Crowned on the Head."

M. VIEUXBOIS (*drowsily*).

"She was an Angel" . . . "Once she laughed" . . .
What, was I dreaming ?

Where's the draught !

BABETTE (*showing the empty cup*).

The draught, M'sieu' ?

M. VIEUXBOIS.

How I forget!

I am so old! But sing, BABETTE!

BABETTE (*sings*).

*"One was the Friend I left
Stark in the Snow;
One was the Wife that died
Long,—long ago;
One was the Love I lost . . .
How could she know?"*

M. VIEUXBOIS (*murmuring*).

Ah, PAUL! . . . old PAUL! . . . EULALIE too!
And ROSE . . . And O! "the sky so blue!"

BABETTE (*sings*).

*"One had my Mother's eyes,
Wistful and mild:
One had my Father's face;
One was a Child:
All of them bent to me,—
Bent down and smiled!"*

(He is asleep!)

M. VIEUXBOIS (*almost inaudibly*).

"How I forget!"

"I am so old!" . . . "Good-night, BABETTE!"

VIGNETTES IN RHYME.

AUSTIN DOBSON.

THE IDYLL OF THE CARP.

(The SCENE is in a garden,—where you please,
So that it lie in France, and have withal
Its gray-stoned pond beneath the arching trees,
And Triton huge, with moss for coronal.
A PRINCESS,—feeding Fish. To her DENISE.)

THE PRINCESS.

THESE, DENISE, are my Suitors !

DENISE.

Where ?

THE PRINCESS.

These fish.

I feed them daily here at morn and night
With crumbs of favour,—scraps of graciousness,
Not meant, indeed, to mean the thing they wish,
But serving just to edge an appetite.

[*Throwing bread.*]

Make haste, *Messieurs* ! Make haste, then ! Hurry.
See,—
See how they swim ! Would you not say, confess,
Some crowd of Courtiers in the audience hall,
When the King comes ?

DENISE.

You're jesting !

THE PRINCESS.

Not at all.

Watch but the great one yonder ! There's the Duke ;—
Those gill-marks mean his Order of St. Luke ;
Those old skin-stains his boasted quarterings.
Look what a swirl and roll of tide he brings ;
Have you not marked him thus, with crest in air,
Breathing disdain, descend the palace-stair ?
You surely have, DENISE.

DENISE.

I think I have.

But there's another, older and more grave,—
The one that wears the round patch on the throat,
And swims with such slow fins. Is he of note ?

THE PRINCESS.

Why that's my good *chambellan*—with his seal.
A kind old man !—he carves me orange-peel
In quaint devices at refection-hours,
Equips my sweet-pouch, brings me morning flowers,
Or chirrups madrigals with old, sweet words,
Such as men loved when people wooed like birds
And spoke the true note first. No suitor he,
Yet loves me too,—though in a graybeard's key.

DENISE.

Look, Madam, look !—a fish without a stain !
O speckless, fleckless fish ! Who is it, pray,
That bears him so discreetly ?

THE PRINCESS.

FONTENAY.

You know him not ? My prince of shining locks !
My pearl !—my Phœnix !—my pomander-box !
He loves not Me, alas ! The man's too vain !
He loves his doublet better than my suit,—
His graces than my favours. Still his sash
Sits not amiss, and he can touch the lute
Not wholly out of tune—

DENISE.

Ai ! what a splash !

Who is it comes with such a sudden dash
Plump i' the midst, and leaps the others clear ?

THE PRINCESS.

Ho ! for a trumpet ! Let the bells be rung !
Baron of *Sans-terre*, Lord of *Prés-en-Cieux*,
Vidame of *Vol-au-Vent*—“ *et aultres lieux* ! ”
Bah ! How I hate his Gasconading tongue !
Why, that's my bragging Bravo-Musketeer—
My carpet cut-throat, valiant by a scar
Got in a brawl that stands for Spanish war :—
His very life's a splash !

DENISE.

I'd rather wear

E'en such a patched and melancholy air,
As his,—that motley one,—who keeps the wall,
And hugs his own lean thoughts for carnival.

THE PRINCESS.

My frankest wooer ! Thus *his* love he tells
To mournful moving of his cap and bells.

He loves me (so he saith) as Slaves the Free,—
As Cowards War,—as young Maids Constancy.
Item, he loves me as the Hawk the Dove ;
He loves me as the Inquisition Thought ;—

DENISE.

“He loves?—he loves?” Why all this loving’s naught!

THE PRINCESS.

And “Naught (quoth JACQUOT) makes the sum of
Love!”

DENISE.

The cynic knave! How call you this one here?—
This small, shy-looking fish, that hovers near,
And circles, like a cat around a cage,
To snatch the surplus.

THE PRINCESS.

CHÉRUBIN, the page.

’Tis but a child, yet with that roguish smile,
And those sly looks, the child will make hearts ache
Not five years hence, I prophesy. Meanwhile,
He lives to plague the swans upon the lake,
To steal my comfits, and the monkey’s cake.

DENISE.

And these—that swim aside—who may these be?

THE PRINCESS.

Those—are two gentlemen of Picardy,
Equal in blood,—of equal bravery :—
D’AURELLES and MAUFRIGNAC. They hunt in pair ;
I mete them morsels with an equal care,
Lest they should eat each other,—or eat Me.

DENISE.

And that—and that—and that ?

THE PRINCESS.

I name them not.

Those are the crowd who merely think their lot
The lighter by my land.

DENISE.

And is there none

More prized than most ? There surely must be one,—
A Carp of carps !

THE PRINCESS.

Ah me !—he will not come !

He swims at large,—looks shyly on,—is dumb.
Sometimes, indeed, I think he fain would nibble,
But while he stays with doubts and fears to quibble,
Some gilded fop, or mincing courtier-fribble,
Slips smartly in,—and gets the proffered crumb.
He should have all my crumbs—if he'd but ask ;
Nay, an he would, it were no hopeless task
To gain a something more. But though he's brave,
He's far too proud to be a dangling slave ;
And then—he's modest ! So . . . he will not come !

AT THE SIGN OF THE LYRE.

AUSTIN DOBSON.

A FANCY FROM FONTENELLE.

*"De mémoires de Roses on n'a point vu mourir le
Jardinier."*

THE Rose in the garden slipped her bud,
And she laughed in the pride of her youthful
blood,
As she thought of the Gardener standing by—
"He is old,—so old ! And he soon must die !"

The full Rose waxed in the warm June air,
And she spread and spread till her heart lay bare ;
And she laughed once more as she heard his tread—
"He is older now ! He will soon be dead !"

But the breeze of the morning blew and found
That the leaves of the blown rose strewed the ground ;
And he came at noon, that Gardener old,
And he raked them softly under the mould.

*And I wove the thing to a random rhyme,
For the Rose is Beauty, the Gardener Time.*

MISCELLANEOUS POEMS.

AUSTIN DOBSON.

I.

A SONG OF THE FOUR SEASONS.

WHEN Spring comes laughing
By vale and hill,
By wind-flower walking
And daffodil,—
Sing stars of morning,
Sing morning skies,
Sing blue of speedwell,—
And my Love's eyes.

When comes the Summer,
Full-leaved and strong,
And gay birds gossip
The orchard long,—
Sing hid, sweet honey
That no bee sips ;
Sing red, red roses,—
And my Love's lips.

When Autumn scatters
The leaves again,
And piled sheaves bury
The broad-wheeled wain,—
Sing flutes of harvest
Where men rejoice ;
Sing rounds of reapers,—
And my Love's voice.

But when comes Winter
 With hail and storm,
 And red fire roaring
 And ingle warm,—
 Sing first sad going
 Of friends that part ;
 Then sing glad meeting,—
 And my Love's heart.

II.

THE PARADOX OF TIME.

(VARIATION ON RONSARD.)

"Le temps s'en va, le temps s'en va, ma dame!
 Las ! le temps non : mais NOUS nous en allons !"

TIME goes, you say ? Ah no !

Alas, Time stays, *we* go ;

Or else, were this not so,

What need to chain the hours,

For Youth were always ours ?

Time goes, you say ?—ah no !

Ours is the eyes' deceit

Of men whose flying feet

Lead through some landscape low ;

We pass, and think we see

The earth's fixed surface flee :—

Alas, Time stays,—we go !

Once in the days of old,

Your locks were curling gold,

And mine had shamed the crow.

Now, in the self-same stage,

We've reached the silver age ;

Time goes, you say ?—ah no !

Once, when my voice was strong,
I filled the woods with song
To praise your "rose" and "snow";
My bird, that sang, is dead;
Where are your roses fled?
Alas, Time stays,—we go!

See, in what traversed ways,
What backward Fate delays
The hopes we used to know;
Where are our old desires?—
Ah, where those vanished fires?
Time goes, you say?—ah no!

How far, how far, O Sweet,
The pass behind our feet
Lies in the even-glow!
Now, on the forward way,
Let us fold hands, and pray;
Alas, Time stays,—*we* go!

III.

TO A GREEK GIRL.

WITH breath of thyme and bees that hum,
Across the years you seem to come,—
Across the years with nymph-like head,
And wind-blown brows unfileted;
A girlish shape that slips the bud
In lines of unspoiled symmetry;
A girlish shape that stirs the blood
With pulse of Spring, Autonoë!

Where'er you pass,—where'er you go,
I hear the pebbly rillet flow ;
Where'er you go,—where'er you pass,
There comes a gladness on the grass ;
You bring blithe airs where'er you tread,—
 Blithe airs that blow from down and sea ;
You wake in me a Pan not dead,—
 Not wholly dead !—Autonoë !

How sweet with you on some green sod
To wreath the rustic garden-god ;
How sweet beneath the chestnut's shade
With you to weave a basket-braid ;
To watch across the stricken chords
 Your rosy-twinkling fingers flee ;
To woo you in soft woodland words,
 With woodland pipe, Autonoë !

In vain,—in vain ! The years divide :
Where Thamis rolls a murky tide,
I sit and fill my painful reams,
And see you only in my dreams ;—
A vision, like Alcestis, brought
 From under-lands of Memory,—
A dream of Form in days of Thought,—
 A dream,—a dream, Autonoë !

FABLES OF LITERATURE AND ART.

AUSTIN DOBSON.

THE POET AND THE CRITICS.

IF those who wield the Rod forget,
'Tis truly—*Quis custodiet?*

A certain Bard (as Bards will do)
Dressed up his Poems for Review.
His Type was plain, his Title clear,
His Frontispiece by FOURDRINIER.
Moreover, he had on the Back
A sort of sheepskin Zodiac ;—
A Mask, a Harp, an Owl,—in fine,
A neat and “classical” Design.
But the *in*-Side ?—Well, good or bad,
The Inside was the best he had :
Much Memory,—more Imitation ;—
Some Accidents of Inspiration ;—
Some Essays in that finer Fashion
Where Fancy takes the place of Passion ;—
And some (of course) more roughly wrought
To catch the Advocates of Thought.

In the less-crowded Age of ANNE,
Our Bard had been a favoured Man ;
Fortune, more chary with the Sickle,
Had ranked him next to GARTH or TICKELL ;—
He might have even dared to hope
A line's malignity from POPE !

But now, when Folks are hard to please,
And Poets are as thick as—Peas,
The Fates are not so prone to flatter,
Unless, indeed, a Friend. . . . No Matter.

The Book, then, had a minor Credit :
The Critics took, and doubtless read it.
Said A.—*These little Songs display
No lyric Gift ; but still a Ray,—
A Promise. They will do no Harm.*
'Twas kindly, if not *very* warm.
Said B.—*The Author may, in time,
Acquire the Rudiments of Rhyme :
His efforts now are scarcely Verse.*
This, certainly, could not be worse.

Sorely discomfited, our Bard
Worked for another ten Years—hard.
Meanwhile the World, unmoved, went on ;
New Stars shot up, shone out, were gone ;
Before his second Volume came
His Critics had forgot his Name :
And who, forsooth, is bound to know
Each Laureate *in embryo* !
They tried and tested him no less,
The pure Assayers of the Press.
Said A.—*The Author, may in Time . . .*
Or much what B. had said of Rhyme.
Then B.—*These little Songs display . . .*
And so forth, in the sense of A.
Over the Bard I throw a Veil.

There is no MORAL to this Tale.

ESSAYS IN OLD FRENCH FORMS.

AUSTIN DOBSON.

I.—A BALLAD OF PROSE AND RHYME.

(BALLADE À DOUBLE REFRAIN.)

WHEN the ways are heavy with mire and rut,
In November fogs, in December snows,
When the North Wind howls, and the doors are shut,—
There is place and enough for the pains of prose ;
But whenever a scent from the whitethorn blows,
And the jasmine-stars at the casement climb,
And a Rosalind-face at the lattice shows,
Then hey !—for the ripple of laughing rhyme!

When the brain gets dry as an empty nut,
When the reason stands on its squarest toes,
When the mind (like a beard) has a " formal cut,"—
There is place and enough for the pains of prose :
But whenever the May-blood stirs and glows,
And the young year draws to the " golden prime,"
And Sir Romeo sticks in his ear a rose,—
Then hey !—for the ripple of laughing rhyme !

In a theme where the thoughts have a pedant-strut,
In a changing quarrel of " Ayes " and " Noes,"
In a starched procession of " If " and " But,"—
There is place and enough for the pains of prose :

But whenever a soft glance softer grows
 And the light hours dance to the trysting-time,
 And the secret is told "that no one knows,"—
 Then hey!—for the ripple of laughing rhyme!

ENVOY.

IN the work-a-day world,—for its needs and woes,
 There is place and enough for the pains of prose;
 But whenever the May-bells clash and chime,
 Then hey!—for the ripple of laughing rhyme!

II.—"IN AFTER DAYS."

(RONDEAU.)

IN after days when grasses high
 O'er-top the stone where I shall lie,
 Though ill or well the world adjust
 My slender claim to honoured dust,
 I shall not question nor reply.

I shall not see the morning sky;
 I shall not hear the night-wind sigh;
 I shall be mute, as all men must
 In after days!

But yet, now living, fain were I
 That some one then should testify,
 Saying—"He held his pen in trust
 To Art, not serving shame or lust."
 Will none?—Then let my memory die
 In after days!

Wilfrid Scawen Blunt.

1840.

WILFRID SCAWEN BLUNT was born at Crabbet Park, Crawley, Sussex, in the year 1840. Educated at Stoneyhurst and St. Mary's College, Oscot, he entered the diplomatic service, and acted as attaché to British embassies at various European courts from 1858 to 1869, in which latter year he married Lady Anne Isabella Noel, daughter of the Earl of Lovelace and grand-daughter of Lord Byron. Leaving the diplomatic service, Mr. Blunt now devoted himself to travel in Spain, Algiers, Egypt, the Holy Land, Mesopotamia, and the Syrian Desert. A result of these travels was Lady Anne Blunt's "Bedouins of the Euphrates." Mr. Blunt then visited Arabia, and published "The Future of Islam;" after which he returned to Egypt, and championed the cause of Arabi Pasha. It was at this time that his name came prominently before the public, and in this connection that he published "The Wind and the Whirlwind." During the Egyptian war he was much abused for want of patriotism, for love of disorder and vanity. Lord Houghton used to say, "The fellow knows he has a handsome head, and wants it to be seen on Temple Bar." His reputation as the writer of love-sonnets scarcely helped him in this connection. People would not believe that a love poet could be a serious politician. He might well have said with Omar Khayyam—

"Indeed, the Idols I have loved so long
Have done my credit in men's eyes much wrong;
Have drown'd my Glory in a shallow Cup,
And sold my Reputation for a song."

After the war, when Arabi was in prison, and apparently on the eve of execution, Mr. Blunt sent counsel from England to defend him, taking upon himself the whole expense of the defence. Mr. Blunt's early education in a strict Catholic school and the subsequent reaction are described in one of his prose works, "*Proteus and Amadeus*," 1878. His mind regained its faith and reverence while living amongst the Arab tribes of the East, and a feeling of gratitude to them was mixed with his natural sympathy for oppressed nationalities.

This same sympathy for a national cause sent him to Ireland, where he took part in a prohibited meeting at Woodford, and did not shrink from the consequences of his defiance of what he believed to be unjust laws. He claims "the honour" of having been the first Englishman put in prison for the sake of Ireland. He spent two months in Galway and Kilmainham gaols, where most of the "*In Vinculis*" sonnets were written. Galway was made tolerable by the friendliness of the warders and of the visiting justices, who were won by his personal bearing and by his cheerful acquiescence in the prison rules. He daily went through his task of picking oakum, and was far from shrinking from the prison dress; his portrait taken in it forms the frontispiece to "*In Vinculis*." Yet to one accustomed to field sports (see "*The Idler's Calendar*") the time went slowly by, especially in the dull monotony of Kilmainham. His life there he describes as "being always at

a railway station, waiting for a train that never came in."

Mr. Blunt's contributions to poetic literature are "Sonnets and Songs," 1875; "The Love-Sonnets of Proteus," 1881; "The Wind and the Whirlwind," 1883; "In Vinculis," 1889; "The New Pilgrimage," 1889. The "Love-Sonnets of Proteus" are dedicated to Lord Lytton, who was the first to tell Mr. Blunt, when they were in the diplomatic service together, that he was a poet (see Sonnet xxiv. in the "New Pilgrimage"). An article by Lord Lytton in the *Nineteenth Century*, Nov. 1881, on "A New Love Poet," drew a good deal of attention to Mr. Blunt's work. With reference to the ballad of "Sancho Sanchez" in the "New Pilgrimage," it will be interesting to record that a visitor, many years ago, on going to a bull-fight at Madrid, was struck by the appearance and bearing of the matadore awaiting the rush of the bull in the arena, and, on inquiry, was told that he was an amateur bull-fighter, a young man from the English Embassy, Mr. Wilfrid Blunt.

His love of his Sussex home is often referred to in his poems. He inherited it from his brother, whose death is lamented in Sonnet lxxix. and the following ones in the "Proteus" volume. His sister also died young, and he was left the only survivor of his family. There is an under-current of sadness in many of the poems, as in "Sed Nos Qui vivimus;" "God help me, there is living none now dares to chide or blame." The winter he now spends in the Egyptian desert, where he has bought a garden, built a house, and cultivates poetry. India he has twice visited, once as Lord Lytton's guest, and again as a traveller and inquirer. His "Ideas

about India" were published in the *Fortnightly*, and afterwards separately; but there is no trace of these journeys to be found in his poems, if we except one verse of "Sed Nos Qui Vivimus." He has devoted much thought and money to improving the breed of Arab horses, and many visitors make a pilgrimage to see the stud at Crabbet.

Mr. Blunt has twice contested Metropolitan constituencies for Parliament, but without success. In 1885 he stood for North Camberwell as a Conservative Home Ruler, and in 1888, while confined in Kilmainham gaol, he contested Deptford as a Radical candidate.

Mr. Blunt makes it his boast that his work belongs rather to the literature of energy than that of form. "High prophets were we of the uncultured lay," he says of the youth of himself and a friend, and in the eighty-ninth of the "Love-Sonnets of Proteus" he formally disavows any ambition for the legitimate laurel.

"I would not, if I could, be called a poet.

I have no natural love of the 'chaste muse.'

If aught be worth the doing I would do it;

And others, if they will, may tell the news.

I care not for their laurels, but would choose

On the world's field to fight, or fall, or run.

My soul's ambition will not take excuse

To play the dial rather than the sun."

He will not, therefore, complain at being measured by his aim, and deem it ungracious in one, while by no means accepting his statement in its total modesty, to allow the proportion of truth it contains to stand undisputed. Whether we be permitted to call him so or not Mr. Blunt is a poet, and if he is one more in potentiality than achievement, it is only because he is so much more a man of action. If his nature could but allow him to devote that vitality to art

which he so liberally expends in the interest of suffering nationalities, he would probably give us some very fine poems indeed. For he has distinctly original vision, the capacity for fresh feeling, a passion for expression of rare fervour, a power of line, and a command of flowing metres. He has music, too, though one cannot but doubt the quality of his ear when one finds him in his preface to his last volume, "*A New Pilgrimage*," vindicating the couplet as the only fit ending for an English sonnet. The form he suggests is virtually a revival of the Spenserian, for though "he is far from saying that the octave is not more perfect without" a third rhyme, yet he would not consider its admission a radical violation. He would occasionally, for lighter themes, extend the form to sixteen lines.

Whether or not Mr. Blunt's verses are to be regarded as sonnets, it is quite certain that many of them are poems. Apart from, and perhaps indeed above, its purely poetic quality, Mr. Blunt's work comes with the fascination of good autobiography, it abounds in that frank self-consciousness which, granted of course that the individuality is interesting to begin with, bears with it a charm that is for ever fresh. There are some few people we like to hear talk of themselves, and Mr. Blunt is one. Otherwise we should hardly have sat out five editions of his Protean lover's soliloquies. The preface to the first, in its striking personal appeal, was irresistibly arousing to the interest; and that to the fourth perhaps still more so. "No life is perfect that has not been lived,—youth in feeling,—manhood in battle,—old age in meditation. Again, no life is perfect that is not sincere. For these two

reasons I have decided to add my name to the title-page of this the Fourth Edition of the Sonnets of Proteus." Here is the same note of almost fierce sincerity which has thrust its author *in vinculis* at Galway and Kilmainham, and which even there makes us follow his dreary days with interest, the sparrows, the spider, the mouse, that cheered them with a little company, and that "gaoler's daughter fair and kind" whose shadow on the window-blind opposite "passes all the evening through." This, though one may at the same time feel that to designate one's judges as "Caiaphas" and "Pilate" is taking oneself a little too seriously.

Regarding Mr. Blunt's work apart from its great interest as *marginalia*, his best things, since certain of the "Love-Sonnets," are perhaps the poems "From the Arabic,"—presumably as Mrs. Browning's sonnets were "From the Portuguese,"—and "Sed Nos Qui Vivimus," both contained in the "New Pilgrimage" volume. Mr. Blunt presents these as experiments in assonance, and as such he is well-justified of them, for though hardly an entire success, they come very near being so. They prove, moreover, what one had already felt, that Mr. Blunt's power lies in the use of those freer unrhymed metres with which few men are to be trusted. He has, they convince one, too real poetic gifts either to need or to make them an excuse for weak omniloquence. He may be trusted to go free, and however it may chance politically, metrically there is no necessity for him any longer to write *in vinculis*.

RICHARD LE GALLIENNE.

SONNETS AND SONGS.

1875.

WILFRID SCAWEN BLUNT.

I.

IN THE NIGHT.

I.

WHERE art thou, thou lost face,
Which, yet a little while, wert making mirth
At these new years which seemed too sad to be ?
Where art thou fled, which, for a minute's space,
Shut out the world, and wert my world to me ?
And now a corner of this little Earth,
A broken shadow by the day forgot,
Is wide enough to be thy hiding-place ;
And thou art shrunk away, and needest not
The darkness of this night to cover thee.

II.

Where art thou hidden ? In the boundless air
My hands go forth to thee, and search and feel
As through the universe. I hold the night
Caught in my arms ; and yet thou art not there.
Where art thou ? What if I should strike a light
So suddenly that thou could'st never steal
Back to thy shadows ? What if I should find
Thee standing close to me, with all thy hair
Trailing about me, and with eyes grown blind
With looking at me vainly through the night ?

III.

There are three rings upon thy hand to-night,
One with a sapphire stone; and one there is
Coiled like a snake; and one on which my name
Is written with strange gems. By this dim light
I cannot read if it be writ the same.
See, I have worn no other ring but this!
—Why dost thou look at me with eyes estranged?
Is it not thine?—Ah, God! thou readest right!
And it is changed, and thou and I are changed
And I have written there another name.

IV.

Oh happiness, how has it slipped away!
We who once lived and held it in our hand!
What is the rest that these new years can bring?
Did we not love it in our love's to-day,
And pleasure, which was so divine a thing,
The sweetest and most strange to understand?
And that is why it left regret behind,
As though a wild bird suddenly should stay
A moment at our side, and we should find,
When we looked up, that it had taken wing.

V.

And thou, hast thou forgotten how to love?
Hast thou no kissing in thy lips?—thy tongue,
Has it no secret whisper for my ear?
I have been watching thee to see thee move
A little closer to my side, in fear
Of the cold night.—Oh there is room among
The pillows for thy head, if thou would'st sleep:
And thou art cold, and I would wrap my love
To my warm breast, and so my vigil keep
And be alone with darkness and with her.

VI.

Thou standest with thy hand upon my heart,
As once thou used to stand, to feel it beat.
Doth it beat calmer now than in those days ?
Thy foolish finger-tips will leave a smart,
If they so press upon my side. Thy gaze
Is burning me. Oh speak a word and cheat
This darkness into pain, if pain must be,
And wake me back to sorrow with a start ;
For I am weary of the night and thee,
And thy strange silence and thy stranger face.

VII.

Canst thou not speak ? Thy tale was but begun.
How can I answer thee a tale untold ?
Whisper it quick before the morning break,
How loud thou weepest ! Listen, there is one
Dreaming beside me who must not awake.
Close in my ear !—Ah, child, thy lips are cold,
Because thou art forsaken.—Misery !
Is there not room enough beneath the sun
For her, and thee, and me ? . . .

II.

THE SUBLIME.

A DOUBLE SONNET.

I.

TO stand upon a windy pinnacle,
Beneath the infinite blue of the blue noon,
And underfoot a valley terrible
As that dim gulf, where sense and being swoon
When the soul parts; a giant valley strewn
With giant rocks; asleep, and vast, and still,
And far away. The torrent, which has hewn
His pathway through the entrails of the hill,
Now crawls along the bottom and anon
Lifts up his voice, a muffled tremulous roar
Borne on the wind an instant, and then gone
Back to the caverns of the middle air;
A voice as of a nation overthrown
With beat of drums, when hosts have marched to war.

II.

CLUTCHING the brink with hands and feet and knees,
With trembling heart, and eyes grown strangely dim,
A part thyself and parcel of the frieze
Of that colossal temple raised to Time,
To gaze on horror, till, as in a crime,
Thou and the rocks become accomplices.
There is no voice, no life, 'twixt thee and them.
No life! Yet, look, far down upon the breeze
Something has passed across the bosom bare
Of the red rocks, a leaf, a shape, a shade.
A living shadow! ay, above thee there
Are others watching.—This is the sublime:
To be alone, with eagles in the air.

III.

AT A FUNERAL.

I LOVED her too, this woman who is dead.
Look in my face. I have a right to go
And see the place where you have made her bed
Among the snow.

I loved her too whom you are burying.
I have a right to stand beside her bier,
And to my handful of the dust I fling,
That she may hear.

I loved her ; and it was not for the eyes
Which you have shut, nor for her yellow hair,
Nor for the face which in your bosom lies,—
Let it lie there,—

Nor for the wild-bird's music of her voice,
Which we shall hear in dreams till we too sleep ;
Nor for the rest, which made the world rejoice,
The angels weep.

It was not for the payment of sweet love,
Though love is often straitened for a kiss ;
Nor for the hope of other joys above,
But only this,

That she had laid her hand upon my heart
Once, in the summer time when we were young
And that her finger-tips had left a smart,
And that my tongue

Had spoken words which might not be unspoken,
Lest they should make a by-word of love's truth,
And I had sworn that love should be the token
Of my youth.

And so I gave her all, and long ago
The treasure of my youth was put in pawn;
And she was little richer that I know
When that was gone.

But I have lived a beggar since that day,
And hide my face if may be from men's eyes;
For often I have seen them shrink away,
As in surprise

That such a loathsome cripple should be found
To walk abroad in daylight with the rest,
With scarce a rag to cover up the wound
Upon his breast.

Yet no man stopped to ask how this might be,
Or I had scared them, and let loose my tongue,—
How I had bought myself this misery
When I was young.

Yet I have loved her. This must be my pay;
The pension I have earned me with these tears;
The right to kneel beside her grave to-day,
Despite these years,

With all her kisses burning on my cheek,
As when I left her and our love was dead,
And our lips trembled though they did not speak,
The night I fled;

The right to bid you stand aside, nor be
A witness of our meeting. Did you love
In joy as I have loved in misery ?

You did not prove

Your love was stronger than the strength of death,
Or she had never died upon your hand.

I would have fed her breathing with my breath ;

I would have fanned

A living wind of heaven to her lips ;

I would have stolen life from Paradise.

And she is dead, and you have seen eclipse

Within those eyes.

* * * * *

If I could know that you had loved her well ;

If I could hold it for a certainty

That you had sold your life as I did sell ;

If I could see

The blackness of your soul, and with my tongue

Taste the full bitterness of tears unshed ;

If I should find your very heart was wrung

And maimed and dead ;

If I should feel your hand's grasp crumble mine,

And hug the pain when I should grasp in turn ;

If I could dip my fingers in the brine

Of eyes that burn ;

If I could hear your voice call back the dead

With such a mighty cry of agony

That she should turn and listen in the bed

Where she doth lie,

And all the heavens should together roll,
Thinking they heard the angel's trumpet tone,
I could forget it that you bought a soul
Which was my own ;

I could forget that she forgot her vows,
That aught was bartered for the wealth of love ;
I could untell the story of my woes,
Till God above

Should hold her guiltless and condone the wrong
Done to His justice ; I could take your hand
And call you brother, as we went along
To take our stand

Before His judgment-seat with her again,
Where we are hurrying,—for we could not **keep**
Our place unchallenged in the ranks of men
Who do not weep.

THE LOVE-SONNETS OF PROTEUS.

1881.

WILFRID SCAWEN BLUNT.

(II.)

I.—TO MANON, COMPARING HER TO A FALCON.

BRAVE as a falcon and as merciless,
With bright eyes watching still the world, thy prey,
I saw thee pass in thy lone majesty,
Untamed, unmated, high above the press.
The dull crowd gazed at thee. It could not guess
The secret of thy proud aerial way,
Or read in thy mute face the soul which lay
A prisoner there in chains of tenderness.
—Lo, thou art captured. In my hand to-day
I hold thee, and awhile thou deign'st to be
Pleased with my jesses. I would fain beguile
My foolish heart to think thou lovest me. See,
I dare not love thee quite. A little while
And thou shalt sail back heavenwards. Woe is me!

(xxvii.)

II.—TO JULIET, EXHORTING HER TO PATIENCE.

WHY do we fret at the inconstancy
Of our frail hearts, which cannot always love?
Time rushes onward, and we mortals move
Like waifs upon a river, neither free
To halt nor hurry. Sweet, if destiny
Throws us together for an hour, a day,
In the back-water of this quiet bay,
Let us rejoice. Before us lies the sea,
Where we must all be lost in spite of love.
We dare not stop to question. Happiness
Lies in our hand unsought, a treasure trove.
Time has short patience of man's vain distress;
And fate grows angry at too long delay;
And floods rise fast, and we are swept away.

(XLVII.)

III.—FAREWELL TO JULIET.

LAME, impotent conclusion to youth's dreams
Vast as all heaven ! See, what glory lies
Entangled here in these base stratagems,
What virtue done to death ! O glorious sighs,
Sublime beseechings, high cajoleries,
Fond wraths, brave raptures, all that sometime was
Our daily bread of gods beneath the skies,
How are ye ended, in what utter loss !
Time was, time is, and time is yet to come,
Till even time itself shall have its end.
These were eternal—and behold, a tomb.
Come let us laugh and eat and drink. God send
What all the world must need one day as we,
Speedy oblivion, rest for memory.

(XLVIII.)

IV.—FAREWELL TO JULIET (CONTINUED).

FAREWELL, then. It is finished. I forego
With this all right in you, even that of tears,
If I have spoken hardly, it will show
How much I loved you. With you disappears
A glory, a romance of many years.
What you may be henceforth I will not know.
The phantom of your presence on my fears
Is impotent at length for weal or woe.
Your past, your present, all alike must fade
In a new land of dreams where love is not.
Then kiss me and farewell. The choice is made
And we shall live to see the past forgot,
If not forgiven. See, I came to curse,
Yet stay to bless. I know not which is worse.

(LXXXV.)

V.—LAUGHTER AND DEATH.

THERE is no laughter in the natural world
Of beast or fish or bird, though no sad doubt
Of their futurity to them unfurled
Has dared to check the mirth-compelling shout.
The lion roars his solemn thunder out
To the sleeping woods. The eagle screams her cry.
Even the lark must strain a serious throat
To hurl his blest defiance at the sky.
Fear, anger, jealousy have found a voice.
Love's pain or rapture the brute bosoms swell.
Nature has symbols for her nobler joys,
Her nobler sorrows. Who had dared foretell
That only man, by some sad mockery,
Should learn to laugh who learns that he must die.

(xc.)

VI.—ON THE SHORTNESS OF TIME.

IF I could live without the thought of death,
Forgetful of Time's waste, the soul's decay,
I would not ask for other joy than breath
With light and sound of birds and the sun's ray.
I could sit on untroubled day by day
Watching the grass grow, and the wild flowers range
From blue to yellow and from red to grey
In natural sequence as the seasons change.
I could afford to wait, but for the hurt
Of this dull tick of time which chides my ear.
But now I dare not sit with loins ungirt
And staff unlifted, for death stands too near.
I must be up and doing—ay, each minute.
The grave gives time for rest when we are in it.

IN VINCULIS.

1889.

WILFRID SCAWEN BLUNT.

(I.)

FROM Caiaphas to Pilate I was sent,
Who judged with unwashed hands a crime to me.
Next came the sentence, and the soldiery
Claimed me their prey. Without, the people rent
With weeping voices the loud firmament.
And through the night from town to town passed we
'Mid shouts and drums and stones hurled heavily
By angry crowds on love and murder bent.
And last the gaol—what stillness in these doors!
The silent turnkeys their last bolts have shot,
And their steps die in the long corridors.
I am alone. My tears run fast and hot.
Dear Lord, for Thy grief's sake I kiss these floors
Kneeling—then turn to sleep, dreams trouble not.

(VI.)

THERE are two voices with me in the night,
Easing my grief. The God of Israel saith,
"I am the Lord thy God which vanquisheth.
See that thou walk unswerving in my sight,
So shall thy enemies thy footstool be.
I will avenge." Then wake I suddenly,
And as a man new armoured for the fight,
I shout aloud against my enemy.
Anon, another speaks, a voice of care
With sorrow laden and akin to grief,
"My son," it saith, "What is my will with thee?
The burden of my sorrows thou shalt share.
With thieves thou too shalt be accounted thief,
And in my kingdom thou shalt sup with me."

(x.)

MY prison has its pleasures. Every day
At breakfast-time, spare meal of milk and bread
Sparrows come trooping in familiar way
With head aside beseeching to be fed.
A spider too for me has spun her thread
Across the prison rules, and a brave mouse
Watches in sympathy the warders' tread,
These two my fellow-prisoners in the house.
But about dusk in the rooms opposite
I see lamps lighted, and upon the blind
A shadow passes all the evening through.
It is the gaoler's daughter fair and kind
And full of pity—so I image it—
Till the stars rise, and night begins anew.

(xv.)

FAREWELL, dark gaol. You hold some better hearts
Than in this savage world I thought to find.
I do not love you nor the fraudulent arts
By which men tutor men to ways unkind.
Your law is not my law, and yet my mind
Remains your debtor. It has learned to see
How dark a thing the earth would be and blind
But for the light of human charity.
I am your debtor thus and for the pang
Which touched and chastened, and the nights of thought
Which were my years of learning. See I hang
Your image here, a glory all unsought,
About my neck. Thus saints in symbol hold
Their tools of death and darings manifold.

A NEW PILGRIMAGE.

1889.

WILFRID SCAWEN BLUNT.

(VII.)

AH, Paris, Paris ! What an echo rings
Still in those syllables of vain delight !
What voice of what dead pleasures on what wings
Of Mœnad laughters pulsing through the night !
How bravely her streets smile on me—how bright
Her shops, her houses, fair sepulchral things,
Stored with the sins of men forgotten quite,
The loves of mountebanks, the lusts of kings !
What message has she to me on this day
Of my new life ? Shall I, a pilgrim wan,
Sit at her board and revel at her play,
As in the days of old ? Nay, this is done.
It cannot be ; and yet I love her well
With her broad roads and pleasant paths to hell.

(xiv.)

TO-DAY there is no cloud upon thy face,
Paris, fair city of romance and doom !
Thy memories do not grieve thee, and no trace
Lives of their tears for us who after come.
All is forgotten—thy high martyrdom,
Thy rage, thy vows, thy vauntings, thy disgrace,
With those who died for thee to beat of drum,
And those who lived to see thee kingdomless.
Indeed thou art a woman in thy mirths,
A woman in thy griefs which leave thee young,
A prudent virgin still, despite the births
Of these sad prodigies thy bards have sung.
What to thy whoredoms is a vanished throne ?
A chair where a fool sat, and he is gone !

(xv.)

FOR thus it is. You flout at kings to-day.
To-morrow in your pride you shall stoop low
To a new tyrant who shall come your way,
And serve him meekly with mock serious brow,
While the world laughs. I shall not laugh at you.
Your Bourbon, Bonaparte or Boulanger
Are foils to your own part of "ingenue"
Which moves me most, the moral of your play.
You have a mission in the world, to teach
All pride its level. Poet, prince and clown,
Each in your amorous arms has scaled the breach
Of his own pleasure and the world's renown.
Till with a yawn you turn, and from your bed
Kick out your hero with his ass's head.

(xvi.)

GODS, what a moral! Yet in vain I jest.
The France which has been, and shall be again,
Is the most serious, and perhaps the best,
Of all the nations which have power with men.
France, only of the nations, has this plain
Thought in the world, to scorn hypocrisy;
And by this token she shall purge the stain
Of her sins yet, though these as scarlet be.
Let her put off her folly! 'Tis a cloak
Which hides her virtue. Let her foremost stand,
The champion of all necks which feel the yoke,
As once she stood sublime in every land.
Let her forego her Tonquins, and make good
Her boast to man of man's high brotherhood.—

(XXIX.)

HOW strangely now I come, a man of sorrow,
Nor yet such sorrow as youth dreamed of, blind—
But life's last indigence which dares not borrow
One garment more of Hope to cheat life's wind.
The mountains which we loved have grown unkind,
Nay, voiceless rather. Neither sound nor speech
Is heard among them, nor the thought enshrined
Of any deity man's tears may reach.
If I should speak, what echo would there come,
Of laughter lost, and dead unanswered prayers?
The shadow of each valley is a tomb
Filled with the dust of manifold despairs.
"Here we once lived."—This motto on the door
Of silence stands, shut fast for evermore.

THE IDLER'S CALENDAR.

WILFRID SCAWEN BLUNT.

I.

APRIL.

TROUT-FISHING.

THIS morning, through my window, half awake,
I felt the south wind blow; and presently,
With a tumultuous thrill and then a shake,
The nightingale broke forth in melody.
I rose in haste, and looked at the grey sky,
And read an omen. From its corner next
A book I drew, blest book, where fly on fly
Are all the letters of its well-thumbed text.
I chose my cast, a march-brown and a dun,
And ran down to the river, chasing hope.
At the first throw a mighty trout was on,
A very Samson, fit to burst a rope,
Yet tamed by one sad hank of yielding hair
And fate, the fisherman of king and pope.
Upon the grass he lies, and gasps the air,
Four silver pounds, sublimely fat and fair.

II.

NOVEMBER.

ACROSS COUNTRY.

NOVEMBER'S here.—Once more the pink we don,
And on old Centaur, at the coverside,
Sit changing pleasant greetings one by one
With friend and neighbour. Half the county's pride
Is here to-day. Squire, parson, peer, bestride
Their stoutest nags, impatient to be gone.

Here, schoolboys on their earliest ponies ride,
And village lads on asses, not out-done.
But hark ! That sounds like music. Ay, by God !
He's off across the fallow. "No, sirs, no ;
Not yet a minute, just another rod !

Then let him have it. Ho, there, tallyho !"
Now that's worth seeing ! Look ! He's topped the wall,
Leaving his whole field pounded in a row.
A first flight place to-day was worth a fall—
So forward each, and heaven for us all !

FROM THE ARABIC.

WILFRID SCAWEN BLUNT.

I.

THE CAMEL-RIDER.

I.

THERE is no thing in all the world but love,
No jubilant thing of sun or shade worth one sad tear.
Why dost thou ask my lips to fashion songs
Other than this, my song of love to thee ?

II.

See where I lie and pluck the thorns of grief,
Dust on my head and fire, as one who mourns his slain.
Are they not slain, my treasures of dear peace ?
This their red burial is, sand heaped on sand.

III.

Here came I in the morning of my joys.
Before the dawn was born, through the dark downs I rode.
The low stars led me on as with a voice,
Stars of the scorpion's tail in the deep south.

IV.

Sighing I came, and scattering wide the sand.
No need had I to urge her speed with hand or heel,
The creature I bestrode. She knew my haste,
And knew the road I sought, the road to thee.

V.

Jangling her bells aloud in wantonness,
And sighing soft, she too, her sighs to my soul's sighs ;
Behind us the wind followed thick with scents
Of incense blossoms and the dew's of night.

VI.

The thorn trees caught at us with their crook'd hands ;
The hills in blackness hemmed us in and hid the road ;
The spectres of the desert howled and warned ;
I heeded nothing of their words of woe.

VII.

Thus till the dawn I sped in my desire,
Breasting the ridges, slope on slope, till morning broke ;
And lo ! the sun revealed to me no sign,
And lo ! the day was widowed of my hope.

VIII.

Where are the tents of pleasure and dear love,
Set in the Vale of Thyme, where winds in Spring are
fain ?
The highways of the valley, where they stood
Strong in their flocks, are there. But where are they ?

IX.

The plain was dumb, as emptied of all voice ;
No bleat of herds, no camels roaring far below
Told of their presence in the pastures void,
Of the waste places which had been their homes.

X.

I climbed down from my watch-tower of the rocks,
To where the tamarisks grow, and the dwarf palms,
alarmed.
I called them with my voice, as the deer calls,
Whose young the wolves have hunted from their place.

XI.

I sought them in the foldings of the hill,
In the deep hollows shut with rocks, where no winds
blow :
I sought their footstep under the tall cliffs,
Shut from the storms, where the first lambs are born.

XII.

The tamarisk boughs had blossomed in the night,
And the white broom which bees had found, the wild
bees' brood.

But no dear signal told me of their life,
No spray was torn in all that world of flowers.

XIII.

Where are the tents of pleasure and dear love,
For which my soul took ease for its delight in Spring,
The black tents of her people beautiful
Beyond the beauty of the sons of kings ?

XIV.

The wind of war has swept them from their place,
Scattering them wide as quails, whom the hawk's
hate pursues ;
The terror of the sword importunate
Was at their backs, nor spared them as they flew.

XV.

The summer wind has passed upon their fields ;
The rain has purged their hearth-stones, and made
smooth their floors ;
Low in the valley lie their broken spears,
And the white bones which are their tale forlorn.

XVI.

Where are the sons of Saba in the South,
The men of mirth and pride to whom my songs were sung
The kinsmen of her soul who is my soul,
The brethren of her beauty whom I love ?

XVII.

She mounted her tall camel in the waste,
Loading it high for flight with her most precious things
She went forth weeping in the wilderness,
Alone with fear on that far night of ill.

XVIII.

She fled mistrusting, as the wild roe flees,
Turning her eyes behind her, while fear fled before ;
No other refuge knew she than her speed,
And the black land that lies where night is born.

XIX.

Under what canopy of sulphurous heaven,
Dark with the thunderclouds unloosing their mad
tongues,
Didst thou lie down aweary of thy burden,
In that dread place of silence thou hadst won ?

XX.

Close to what shelter of what naked rocks,
Carved with what names of terror of what kings of old,
Near to what monstrous shapes unmerciful,
Watching thy death, didst thou give up thy soul ?

XXI.

Or dost thou live by some forgotten well,
Waiting thy day of ransom to return and smile,
As the birds come when Spring is in the heaven,
And dost thou watch me near while I am blind ?

XXII.

Blind in my tears, because I only weep,
Kindling my soul to fire because I mourn my slain,
My kindred slain, and thee, and my dear peace,
Making their burial thus, sand heaped on sand.

XXIII.

For see, there nothing is in all the world
But only love worth any strife or song or tear,
Ask me not then to sing or fashion songs
Other than this, my song of love to thee.

Cosmo Monkhouse.

1840—1901.

WILLIAM COSMO MONKHOUSE was born in London on the 18th of March, 1840. His father was an English solicitor, and his mother a descendant of the old French family of Delafosse, who were refugees from the Edict of Nantes. He was educated at St. Paul's School, and at the age of seventeen entered the Board of Trade, where he became one of that distinguished little band of *littérateurs* which seems destined to give to Whitehall a fragrant association oddly similar to that which clings to the traditions of the old India House. He was not long in finding literature, and while still very young contributed verses and stories to *Temple Bar*, *Chambers's Journal*, *Once a Week*, *All the Year Round*, and other periodicals. In 1865 he published his "Dream of Idleness, and other Poems," from which "The Chief Ringer's Burial," "The Night Express," and "Posthumous" are here reprinted, and in 1868 a novel entitled "A Question of Honour." Since then he has become widely known as an art critic, having written a volume on "The Earlier English Water-Colour Painters;" on Turner, for "The Great Artists" series; on "The Italian Pre-Raphaelites," for the National Gallery; having re-edited Mrs. Heaton's "Concise History of Painting," for Bohn's "Artists" series; contributed a

series of biographies of painters to the "Dictionary of National Biography," and continuously written for many of the leading periodicals, especially for *The Magazine of Art*, *The Portfolio*, and *The Academy*. In 1890 Mr. Monkhouse published his "Corn and Poppies," a second volume of verse in which he more than fulfilled the promise of the first. As a whole, however, the volume illustrates more the poet's versatility than his special *forte*. He has written good sonnets, one especially fine—"To the Sea," a worthy fellow to Hood's "Sonnet to Silence," and Leigh Hunt's "To the Nile," by virtue of a similar massiveness of thought, and a certain generic relationship of mood and manner; but his natural inspiration is towards measures of a freer movement. Of this flexibility, within the bounds of a single composition, his "Sonata" of "Love" is the most striking example, for all the various movements blend into each other with surprising flow, while the still more difficult unity of the whole is unbroken.

RICHARD LE GALLIENNE.

Cosmo Monkhouse died on the 20th of July, 1901.

THE CHIEF RINGER'S BURIAL.

COSMO MONKHOUSE.

A MUFFLED peal, a muffled peal.
Keep time !
With your hands and with your hearts
Mind your parts :
Ring, toll, chime.
Ring as he would wish to hear you ,
Ring as he were here to cheer you ;
Ring, toll, chime.

A muffled peal, a muffled peal.
Keep time !
Do him honour with your ringing,
Sorrow-singing ;—
Ring, toll, chime.
Out of sorrow joy has birth :
Sorrow is but muffled mirth ;—
Ring, toll, chime.

A muffled peal, a muffled peal.
Keep time !
He taught you how to ring a knell ;
Ring his well.
Ring, toll, chime.
Ring his knell with solemn beauty ;
Cast your grief into your duty ;—
Ring, toll, chime.

A muffled peal, a muffled peal.

Keep time !

Make the big bells heave and throb ;

Make them sob ;—

Ring, toll, chime.

Make them sob to-day with sorrow,

They shall laugh again to-morrow.

Ring, toll, chime.

THE NIGHT EXPRESS.

COSMO MONKHOUSE.

WITH three great snorts of strength,
Stretching my mighty length,
Like some long dragon stirring in his sleep,
Out from the glare of gas
Into the night I pass,
And plunge alone into the silence deep.

Little I know or care
What be the load I bear,
Why thus compell'd, I seek not to divine ;
At man's command I stir,
I, his stern messenger !
Does he his duty well as I do mine ?

•
Straight on my silent road,
Flank'd by no man's abode,
No foe I parley with, no friend I greet ;
On like a bolt I fly
Under the starry sky,
Scorning the current of the sluggish street.

Onward from South to North,
Onward from Thames to Forth,
On—like a comet—on, unceasingly ;
Faster and faster yet
On—where far boughs of jet
Stretch their wild woof against the pearly sky.

Faster and faster still—
Dive I through rock and hill,
Starting the echoes with my shrill alarms;
Swiftly I curve and bend;
While, like an eager friend,
The distance runs to clasp me in its arms.

Ne'er from my path I swerve
Rattling around a curve
Not vainly trusting to my trusty bars;
On through the hollow night,
While, or to left or right,
A city glistens like a clump of stars.

On through the night I steer;
Never a sound I hear
Save the strong beating of my steady stroke—
Save when the circling owl
Hoots, or the screaming fowl
Rise from the marshes like a sudden smoke.

Now, o'er a gulf I go:
Dark is the depth below,
Smites the slant beam the shoulder of the height—
Now through a lane of trees—
Past sleeping villages,
Their white walls whiter in the silver light.

Be the night foul or fair,
Little I reck or care,
Bandy with storms, and with the tempests jest;
Little I care or know
What winds may rage or blow,
But charge the whirlwind with a dauntless breast.

Now—through the level plain,
While, like a mighty mane,
Stretches my endless breath in cloudy miles ;
Now—o'er a dull lagoon,
While the broad beamed moon
Lights up its sadness into sickly smiles.

O, 'tis a race sublime !
I, neck and neck with Time,—
I, with my thews of iron and heart of fire,—
Run without pause for breath,
While all the earth beneath
Shakes with the shocks of my tremendous ire !

On—till the race be won ;
On—till the coming sun
Blinds moon and stars with his excessive light ;
On—till the earth be green,
And the first lark be seen
Shaking away with songs the dews of night.

Sudden my speed I slack—
Sudden all force I lack—
Without a struggle yield I up my breath ;
Numb'd are my thews of steel,
Wearily rolls each wheel,
My heart cools slowly to the sleep of death.

Why for so brief a length
Dower'd with such mighty strength ?
Man is my God—I seek not to divine :
At his command I stir,
I, his stern messenger ;—
Does he his duty well as I do mine ?

POSTHUMOUS.

COSMO MONKHOUSE.

WELCOME, oh, welcome dear, home to my breast,
My heart was all empty, and longed for a guest,
Enter my birdie, and make it thy nest,
Flesh of my flesh and bone of my bone.
Eyes of violet, cheeks of rose,
On her brow the lily blows.
Look how my baby garden grows !
Sleep, my pretty one, all mine own.

We will be merry, my baby and I,
Two can laugh where one would sigh ;
Two can live where one would die,
Flesh of my flesh and bone of my bone.
Twin little hands and twin little feet,
Soft little breath so warm and sweet,
Five little senses, all complete ;—
Sleep my pretty one, all mine own.

Others may quarrel, but we will agree ;
Others grow weary, but not so we.
Life is all new for my baby and me.
Flesh of my flesh and bone of my bone.
Thou art my baby, and I will be thine,
I'll be thy plaything, and thou shalt be mine.
My laughter bell'd coral, my toy divine.
Sleep my pretty one, all mine own.

ANY SOUL TO ANY BODY.

COSMO MONKHOUSE.

SO we must part, my body, you and I,
Who've spent so many pleasant years together.
'Tis sorry work to lose your company
Who clove to me so close, whate'er the weather,
From winter unto winter, wet or dry;
But you have reached the limit of your tether,
And I must journey on my way alone,
And leave you quietly beneath a stone.

They say that you are altogether bad
(Forgive me, 'tis not my experience),
And think me very wicked to be sad
At leaving you, a clod, a prison, whence
To get quite free I should be very glad.
Perhaps I may be so, some few days hence,
But now, methinks, 'twere graceless not to spend
A tear or two on my departing friend.

Now our long partnership is near completed,
And I look back upon its history;
I greatly fear I have not always treated
You with the honesty you showed to me.
And I must own that you have oft defeated
Unworthy schemes by your sincerity,
And by a blush or stammering tongue have tried
To make me think again before I lied.

Tis true you're not so handsome as you were,
But that's not your fault and is partly mine.
You might have lasted longer with more care,
And still looked something like your first design
And even now, with all your wear and tear,
'Tis pitiful to think I must resign
You to the friendless grave, the patient prey
Of all the hungry legions of Decay.

But you must stay, dear body, and I go.
And I was once so very proud of you,
You made my mother's eyes to overflow
When first she saw you, wonderful and new.
And now, with all your faults, 'twere hard to find
A slave more willing or a friend more true.
Ay—even they who say the worst about you
Can scarcely tell what I shall do without you.

HER FACE.

COSMO MONKHOUSE.

I.

HAD I a painter's skill,
There are no changeless lines
That could its grace imprison,
But as I laboured still
To trace its sweet confines,
Ever some quick spontaneous light,
As of a star,
Or sun new-risen,
Would change the cold to warm, the dull to bright,
And all my labour mar.

II.

Ever some secret missed,
Some swift-escaping glow,
Some one look in the eyes,
Some strange smile never kissed,
Would melt as melting snow ;
That even were my pencil quicker
Than wind or wing,
Or could it rise
And fall as shadows to the leaves' least flicker,
It were a useless thing.

III.

Only but yesterday
She was as cold as ice,
As any marble still,
Her eyes were pale and gray
As though for sacrifice ;
I little ever thought to see her so ;
But as I came,
Her loving will
Filled her sweet features, as an afterglow
Fills the gray skies with flame.

IV.

'Tis ever strange to me,
When she is sad at heart,
Where her deep dimples go,
And like a mystery
When back again they start.
How can my hand move quicker than my eyes,
Which are too slow
To disentwine
The least of all the sweet intricacies
Of her face which is mine ?

V.

And yet I sometimes think
'Tis just because I love her
I cannot draw her face,
Because upon the brink
I hang till all is over,
The fingers waiting for the soul's release.
If for the space
I see my love
My mouth is voiceless till the vision cease,
How shall my fingers move ?

VI.

But if I sing of her
When she is far removed
May I not limn her too ?
Ah, if much worth ye were
My songs, if my beloved
Would quicken ye with music of her face.
Each day anew
Some song I sing,
Yet of her loveliness not one small grace
Makes it a precious thing.

VII.

Natheless I know her well—
Though she change e'en as much
As light within a flower,
And aye her face can tell,
Because there is none such
In any land beyond the farthest sea,
And hour by hour
I wonder why
She ever thought to give it all to me—
To me so utterly.

VIII.

Yet many a portrait fair
Of other lovely ones
Have I seen like to her.
I seem to hear the air
Sweet with her very tones.
Yet what to me were such things to possess !
Ay, though they stir
With life and speak !
Wanting that little one unruly tress
That strays upon her cheek.

IX.

She is beyond all art
Of any sweetest word,
Of brush however fine ;
And yet I wrong my heart
Who hath a chamber stored
With many a face of her and perfect all.
Ah, joy divine,
When quite alone,
To steal and turn them slowly from the wall,
Tenderly, one by one.

A DEAD MARCH.

COSMO MONKHOUSE.

PLAY me a march lowtoned and slow—a march
for a silent tread,
Fit for the wandering feet of one who dreams of the
silent dead,
Lonely, between the bones below and the souls
that are overhead.

Here for awhile they smiled and sang, alive in the
interspace ;
Here with the grass beneath the foot, and the stars
above the face,
Now are their feet beneath the grass, and whither
has flown their grace ?

Who shall assure us whence they come or tell us
the way they go ?
Verily, life with them was joy, and now they have
left us, woe,
Once they were not, and now they are not, and this
is the sum we know.

Orderly range the seasons due, and orderly roll the
stars.
How shall we deem the soldier brave who frets of
his wounds and scars ?
Are we as senseless brutes that we should dash at
the well-seen bars ?

No, we are here, with feet unfixed, but ever as if
with lead

Drawn from the orbs which shine above to the orb
on which we tread,

Down to the dust from which we came and with
which we shall mingle dead.

No, we are here to wait, and work, and strain our
banished eyes,

Weary and sick of soil and toil, hungry and fain
for skies

Far from the reach of wingless men and not to be
scaled with cries.

No, we are here to bend our necks to the yoke of
tyrant Time.

Welcoming all the gifts he gives us—glories of youth
and prime,

Patiently watching them all depart as our heads
grow white as rime.

Why do we mourn the days that go—for the same
sun shines each day,

Ever a spring her primrose hath, and ever a May
her may—

Sweet as the rose that died last year, is the rose
that is born to-day.

Do we not too return, we men, as ever the round
earth whirls ?

Never a head is dimmed with gray, but another is
sunned with curls,

She was a girl and he was a boy, but yet there are
boys and girls.

Ah, but alas for the smile of smiles that never but
one face wore.

Ah for the voice that has flown away like a bird
to an unseen shore.

Ah for the face—the flower of flowers—that blossoms
on earth no more.

UNDER THE OAK.

(To W. E. H.)

COSMO MONKHOUSE.

SOFT the windblow and sunshine
In this garden which is mine,
Scarce a hundred yards in girth,
Yet a part of all the earth !
World for carpet, roof of skies,
Walls of Nature's tapestries,
Nought between the sun and me
Save the curtain of a tree.

Here as 'neath the oak I sit,
Whisperings come out of it ;
Summer-fancies, half desires,
Breaths that fan forgotten fires,
Trembling little waifs of song
Seeking words to make them strong,
Life that dies without a sorrow,
Butterflies of no to-morrow,
Odours of a bygone day,
All the sweets that will not stay,
All the sweets that never cloy,
Unembodied souls of joy,
Sing and flutter, flash and go,
With a ceaseless interflow ;
Till at last some happier seed,
Finds the rest its brothers need,

Strikes a root and grows and climbs,
Buds in words and flowers in rhymes.

Who shall tell me how it came !
Was it in the winnowed flame
Golden-dripping through the leaves
Like the grain of heavenly sheaves ?
From the voice of throstle clear
Was it filtered through the ear ?
Came it thus, or did it come
Borne upon the wild bees' hum,
That a moment buzzed around
With a circle charmed of sound ?
Or did zephyr in a dell,
Steal it with a scent as well
From some hidden flower-bell,
To instil its life in me
With a subtle chemistry ?

Little knew I, but a sense,
Solemn, delicate, intense,
Filled my spirit with a bliss,
Sweeter, holier, than a kiss.
Liquid, radiant, unthought,
That at once all being brought
Into rarer harmony,
Beast, and bird, and sun, and tree,
Air and perfume, God and me.

Just as one whose birthright lost,
Wander-struck, and passion-tost,
After many a loveless day
Sails at length into a bay
Where he thinks his bones to lay ;
Finds indeed an end to strife,
Not in dying, but in life,

Friends and kindred, birthright, all,
With dear love for coronal.

So at length I seemed at home
Underneath that distant dome,
Where the spirit holds at ease
Frank communion with the trees ;
Comrade of the boundless wind,
Linked in universal mind
With all things which live or are,
From the daisy to the star,
Part for once of nature's plan
Not the lonely exile—Man.

TO A NEW-BORN CHILD.

(To L. M., 1873).

COSMO MONKHOUSE.

SMALL traveller from an unknown shore,
By mortal eye ne'er seen before,
To you, good morrow.
You are as fair a little dame
As ever from a glad world came
To one of sorrow.

We smile above you, but you fret,
We call you gentle names, and yet
Your cries redouble.
'Tis hard for little babes to prize
The tender love that underlies
A life of trouble.

And have you come from Heaven to Earth ?
That were a road of little mirth,
A doleful travel.
"Why did I come ?" you seem to cry,
But that's a riddle you and I
Can scarce unravel.

Perhaps you really wished to come,
But now you are so far from home
Repent the trial.
What ! did you leave celestial bliss
To bless us with a daughter's kiss ?
What self-denial !

Have patience for a little space,
You might have come to a worse place,
 Fair Angel-rover.
No wonder now you would have stayed,
But hush your cries, my little maid,
 The journey's over.

For, utter stranger as you are,
There yet are many hearts ajar
 For your arriving,
And trusty friends and lovers true
Are waiting, ready-made for you,
 Without your striving.

The Earth is full of lovely things,
And if at first you miss your wings,
 You'll soon forget them ;
And others, of a rarer kind,
Will grow upon your tender mind—
 If you will let them—

Until you find that your exchange
Of Heaven for earth expands your range
 E'en as a flier,
And that your mother, you and I,
If we do what we should may fly
 Than Angels higher.

A SONG OF THE SEASONS.

COSMO MONKHOUSE.

SING a song of Spring-time,
The world is going round,
Blown by the south wind :

Listen to its sound.

"Gurgle" goes the mill-wheel,

"Cluck" clucks the hen ;

And it's O for a pretty girl

To kiss in the glen.

Sing a song of Summer,

The world is nearly still,

The mill-pool has gone to sleep,

And so has the mill.

Shall we go a-sailing,

Or shall we take a ride,

Or dream the afternoon away

Here, side by side ?

Sing a song of Autumn,

The world is going back ;

They glean in the corn-field,

And stamp on the stack.

Our boy, Charlie,

Tall, strong, and light :

He shoots all the day

And dances all night.

Sing a song of Winter,

The world stops dead ;

Under snowy coverlid

Flowers lie a-bed.

There's hunting for the young ones

And wine for the old,

And a sexton in the churchyard

Digging in the cold.

SONNET: TO THE SEA.

COSMO MONKHOUSE.

O SENSELESS Sea, how long shall men proclaim
Thy freedom and thy power ! Slave of the Moon,
Thy wrath is borrowed of the wind, the Noon
Supplies thy smiles, thy life is but a name
That poets use. To thee nor praise nor blame
Belongs. And yet shall man, alas, not soon
Forget to fear thee, and thy dim halls strewn
With bones of bravest man and fairest dame.
The careless fish within thee sport and breed,
The bird above thee spreads her scornful wing :
Yet thou, more lifeless than thy weakest weed,
Canst shake the very soul of Priest and King.
And aye to man thy breathless breast appears
A waste of sighs, a wilderness of tears.

RONDEAU : VIOLET.

COSMO MONKHOUSE.

VIOLET, delicate, sweet,
Down in the deep of the wood,
Hid in thy still retreat,
Far from the sound of the street,
Man and his merciless mood :—
Safe from the storm and the heat,
Breathing of beauty and good
Fragrantly under thy hood,
Violet.
Beautiful maid, discreet,
Where is the mate that is meet,
Meet for thee—strive as he could !
Yet will I kneel at thy feet,
Fearing another one should,
Violet !

John Addington Symonds.

1840—1893.

JOHN ADDINGTON SYMONDS was descended from a family who settled in Shropshire in the middle of the fifteenth century. His father, John Addington Symonds, M.D., married Harriet, daughter of James Sykes, Esq., and Henrietta Abdy, of Albyns, Essex. He was born at Bristol on the 5th of October, 1840, and died at Rome on the 19th of April, 1893. His boyhood was passed in a house on Clifton Hill, which overlooks the valley of the Avon. Delicate health excluded him from athletic sports, and prevented him from acquiring knowledge with any fulness. At thirteen he went to school at Harrow. There, though he passed rapidly through the successive grades and entered the Sixth form at an early age, he did not distinguish himself as a scholar. In November 1858 he entered Balliol College as a Commoner, and in the following summer was elected an open exhibitioner of the college. Under the influence of Professor Conington, who introduced him to the society of men like the late Professor T. H. Green, Professors Bryce and Dicey, his mind began to wake to intellectual interests, and his natural bent for literature was powerfully stimulated. He won the Newdigate prize for English verse; and took a first-class in Classical Moderations during the summer of 1860. After this, while reading philo-

sophy and history for the final examination, he fell under the influence of Professor Jowett, to whom he owes more than to any one else in the shaping of his mind. He obtained a first-class in Greats (*Lit. Hum.*), the Chancellor's Prize for an English essay on the subject of the "Renaissance," and an open fellowship at Magdalen College. While pursuing the usual course of Oxford study, he paid more attention than is perhaps common to modern literature unconnected with the curriculum, and began to take absorbing interest in the fine arts. In company with his father, who was a man of refined taste and wide culture, he visited Germany, Belgium, Italy, Austria, Switzerland, eagerly examining the monuments of art and history, and discussing the topics they suggested. In 1862 he began to write for the public by contributing to the *Saturday Review*. But in the next year his health, which had always been weak, gave way. He became subject to chronic inflammation of the eyes, attended with an obscure irritability of the brain, which rendered study almost impossible. Travelling in Italy and Switzerland without books, was recommended; and in this way he passed a winter and summer. In November 1864 he married Janet Catherine North, daughter of Frederick North, Esq., M.P. for Hastings, a lineal descendant of the Hon. Roger North, of Rougham Hall. A year afterwards his health was still more severely compromised, for disease of the lungs declared itself, finally shutting him out from any practical career. Between 1864 and 1869 he followed the usual course of a pulmonary invalid, spending winters on the Riviera, and summers in England

or Switzerland. He wrote in these years at intervals for the *Saturday Review*, the *Cornhill Magazine*, the *North British*, and the *Westminster*. But the difficulties under which he laboured, made anything like systematic study or a regular literary life impossible. It was during this period that his feeling for poetry took expression in original verse. In 1869 he removed to Clifton, to be near his father, and began to lecture to the Sixth form of Clifton College. To these lectures and to others, which he addressed to a society of female students, two of his earliest printed works were due: "Introduction to the Study of Dante," and "Studies of the Greek Poets." Another early publication, "Sketches in Italy and Greece," may be ascribed to those journeys in search of health, which had become a necessity of his existence. The first book published under his name appeared in the autumn of 1871, when he was thirty-one years of age; and from that date he continued to write and publish without intermission. The year 1877 brought him a far more formidable illness than any he had yet suffered from, and forced him to settle at Davos Platz in Switzerland. The bracing climate of that high Alpine valley restored him, after a year's slow convalescence, to comparative strength, and enabled him to complete his long work upon the "Renaissance in Italy." It was also at Davos that he translated the sonnets of Michael Angelo and Campanella, composed his own sonnets in "Animi Figura" and "Vagabunduli Libellus," translated the Latin Student Songs of the Middle Ages, gave out two miscellaneous volumes of verse, "Many Moods" and "New and Old," composed his "Shakespeare's Predecessors,"

wrote lives of Shelley, Sidney, Ben Jonson, and Michael Angelo, and translated the autobiographies of Benvenuto Cellini and Carlo Gozzi, and put together his "Essays Speculative and Suggestive." Besides these works his most important writings are the introductions to Sir Thomas Brown, to Thomas Heywood, to Webster and Tourneur, an article on the History of Graubünden, and three volumes which have appeared since his death—namely, Walt Whitman, Giovanni Boccaccio as Man and Author, and Blank Verse. He also kept elaborate diaries and notes of travel, etc., and wrote an autobiographical account of himself, which has been embodied in the life, "John Addington Symonds: a Biography." By Horatio F. Brown. London, 1895." Working under great disadvantages from want of public libraries and separation from the society of the learned, his life became a long schooling in Goethe's precept: "Entbehren sollst du, sollst entbehren,"—Thou must do without, do without! He died in Rome on the 19th of April, 1893, and is buried in the Protestant Cemetery under the old walls of the Eternal City. It is the same cemetery which contains, though in another part, the remains of Keats, and Symonds' grave is close to the grave of Trelawney, and to the spot where lies the heart of Shelley.

Such is the outward story of his life. Its inner meaning for his mind and art, is best indicated by himself in the four touching Sonnets on pp. 512-13 of this selection. By this enforced "Renunciation," the poet both lost and gained. Restrained by the "bridle of Theages" from a practical career, he found in exile and the wilderness his opportunity.

He became a deep and still more a wide student of thought, of letters, of art, of humanity. Naturally universal in his sympathy, he found time to complete the circle of his inquiries. Not less than the gamut of human interest was his aim. "*Multiformis Ennius*," says an ancient critic, and "multiform" is the epithet most applicable to Symonds. "Many Moods" is the title he inscribed himself upon his first poems, and for his motto he chooses Goethe's,—"Im Ganzen, Guten, Schönen resolut zu leben." In this variety he was a true child of his century in its latter day, a century at once of learning and science, a century which in a wider evolution attempts to include both Humanism and the Encyclopædia. He was of his century in his love of observation and analysis, his passion for the *vraie vérité*, his intellectual honesty, intrepid to a fault. He was of it in his love, a love deep, real, and constant, though not expressed under usual forms, of God, and in his democratic sympathies and *camaraderie* with the peasant and the artizan.

The aspiration of his life is perhaps best given in his own beautiful translation of the words of Cleanthes which he made his watchword and which are inscribed upon his tomb,—

Lead Thou me God, Law, Reason, Motion, Life,
All names for Thee alike are vain and hollow ;
Lead me for I will follow without strife,
Or if I strive still must I blindly follow !

And his faith too is best given in his own words, in his sonnets on the Thought of Death.
No. IV.,—

Somehow, we know not how ; somewhere, but where
We know not ; by some hand, we know not whose,
Joy must absorb the whole wide world's despair.
This we call Faith ; but if we dare impose
Form on this faith, we shall but beat the air
Or build foundation on the baseless ooze.

With which, however, should be read the Palinode
headed *Lux est Umbra Dei*.

It was his ambition to be a poet. He spared no pains to fit himself to be one. But he was himself doubtful whether he had the inborn gift, and took perhaps a more depreciatory view of his achievement than did many of his friends. As to the specific character of his poetry, however, he was in the main correct.

To speak critically, his poetry is of the Alexandrine order. It has the finished workmanship of such poetry acquired by exhaustive study of the best models and long and patient exercises. It is worth noting here that he did not disdain to give his best powers to Translation, and was probably, considering his range, the most faithful and facile translator of his time. In an age when good technique is common, Symonds' technique is more than commonly good. Of the effects of language, the values of diction, the movements and balance of harmonies, the evolution of a theme, he was a curious and precise master. Of the sonnet particularly he was among quite the most learned and skilled of contemporary writers. His matter, too, is in the same sense Alexandrine. He was emphatically a *doctus poeta*. In emotion he has the self-conscious and therefore all the more poignant pathos of such a school. Often his poems are

like his essays, "speculative and suggestive," or didactic and philosophic; when descriptive they are idyllic or epyllic. Symonds is not often "popular"; such pieces as "The Crocus and the Soldanella," pp. 509-511, might well become so, and so possibly might a Christmas Carol which he sent to the *English Illustrated Magazine* for December 1891.—

Sleep, baby, sleep! the Mother sings,
Heaven's angels kneel and fold their wings.

Sleep, baby, sleep!
With swathes of scented hay thy bed
By Mary's hand at eve was spread.

Sleep, baby, sleep!
At midnight came the shepherds, they
Whom seraphs wakened by the way.

Sleep, baby, sleep!
And three kings from the East afar
Ere dawn came guided by a star.

Sleep, baby, sleep!
They brought thee gifts of gold and gems,
Rich orient pearls, pure diadems.

Sleep, baby, sleep!
But thou who liest slumbering there
Art King of kings, earth, ocean, air.

Sleep, baby, sleep!
Sleep, baby, sleep! the shepherds sing:
Through heaven, through earth, hosannas ring,

Sleep, baby, sleep!

But as a rule he has too classical a music, is too complex, too scientific for the careless ear of the world. His lyrics are naturally his most spontaneous pieces, but even his lyrics are for the most part dominated by logic. He has an eye for colour and can be pictorial, and at times, as in "Odatis," p. 506, reminds of the blossom and fragrance of Keats, but more often rather of the

austerity of the Lake School, or the pure outline of Landor. His poetry wants too, not seldom, simplicity and concentration. While it possesses besides its intrinsic merit, an interest as the work of a fine critic, it has the disadvantage of being somewhat overshadowed by his prose writings. Where it will rank in the verdict of the future, it is impossible, perhaps, to forecast. Especially is it difficult for those who have come under the spell of his personality to determine how he will affect persons who know him only from his writings. But if, as Schopenhauer says, he alone can deserve the name of genius who takes the All, the Essential, the Universal, for the theme of his achievements, it is, at least, an effort in the true line, and for the rest that poetry is most likely to interest another age which best represents its own. To the "criticism of life" it is a genuine contribution, and he who now or hereafter shall seek to appreciate the spirit of the latter half of the Victorian era, so different from the earlier, and even at this moment changing its note; or again, he who in this perplexing day strives himself to read his age as a whole, will find in Symonds' verse, despite its faults, a *clairvoyant* sympathy in thought, and a truth and beauty in expression, to which his gratitude will not deny even the high name of poetry.

HERBERT WARREN.

PICTURES OF TRAVEL.

JOHN ADDINGTON SYMONDS.

I.

THE TEMPTATION IN THE WILDERNESS.

(SCUOLA DI SAN ROCCO.)

MONOTONOUSLY grey the skies
Westward with hues of rose are barred :
Beneath, the desert landscape lies
Embrowned with crusted scurf and shard
Of salt-flakes, flinty like the hard
Heart of a man long dead to good,
Who festers in his solitude.

No life, where life hath been ; for foul
And ragged on the roof the thatch
Still hangs in tatters, like the cowl
That hoods a skull ; the rusty latch
Creaks on the door ; and many a patch,
Leprous upon the walls within,
Perpetuates the slime of sin.

But who are these ? No lords, I ween,
Of this loathed place. How like a god,
With kingly eyes and brows serene,
Is He, whose bleeding feet unshod
The ghastly wilderness have trod :
How tranquilly upon the stone
That squares the porch, he makes his throne.

Before Him kneels a suppliant, lifts
 Strong arms—yet not with hands that pray,
 Or adoration, or with gifts :
 Woman or Man ? Who knows ? The grey
 Serge from the navel falls away,
 Leaving all bare—breast, throat, and arms
 Snowy with snake-enwoven charms.

The forehead pleads not, but commands :
 The Bacchic bosom heaves with pride :
 Above the elbows, bright as brands,
 Armlets, embossed, on either side,
 Enhance the lustre that they hide—
 The dazzling skin, the flesh that burns
 Like fire in alabaster urns.

Upraised in those broad palms are stones,
 Torn from the pavement, cold and dead,
 Thrust forth in scorn to match the tones
 From lips voluptuously red
 Hissing : "O God ! make these stones bread !"
 He answers from his barren throne :
 "Man shall not live by bread alone."

II.

LE JEUNE HOMME CARESSANT SA CHIMÈRE.

FOR AN INTAGLIO.

A BOY of eighteen years mid myrtle-boughs
 Lying love-languid on a morn of May,
 Watched half-asleep his goats insatiate browse
 Thin shoots of thyme and lentisk, by the spray
 Of biting sea-winds bitter made and grey :
 Therewith when shadows fell, his waking thought
 Of love into a wondrous dream was wrought.

A woman lay beside him,—so it seemed ;
For on her marble shoulders, like a mist
Irradiate with tawny moonrise, gleamed
Thick silken tresses; her white woman's wrist,
Glittering with snaky gold and amethyst,
Upheld a dainty chin ; and there beneath,
Her twin breasts shone like pinks that lilies wreath.

What colour were her eyes I cannot tell ;
For as he gazed thereon, at times they darted
Dun rays like water in a dusky well ;
Then turned to topaz : then like rubies smarted
With smouldering flames of passion tiger-hearted ;
Then 'neath blue-veinèd lids swam soft and tender
With pleadings and shy timorous surrender.

Thus far a woman : but the breath that lifted
Her panting breast with long melodious sighs,
Stirred o'er her neck and hair broad wings that sifted
The perfumes of meridian Paradise ;
Dusk were they, furred like velvet, gemmed with eyes
Of such dull lustre as in isles afar
Night-flying moths spread to the summer star.

Music these pinions made—a sound and surge
Of pines innumerable near lispings waves—
Rustling of reeds and rushes on the verge
Of level lakes and naiad-haunted caves—
Drowned whispers of a wandering stream that laves
Deep alder-boughs and tracts of ferny grass
Bordered with azure-bellèd campanulas.

Potent they were : for never since her birth
With feet of woman this fair siren pressed
Sleek meadow swards or stony ways of earth ;
But 'neath the silken marvel of her breast,
Displayed in sinuous length of coil and crest,
Glittered a serpent's tail, fold over fold,
In massy labyrinths of languor rolled.

Ah, me ! what fascination ! what faint stars
Of emerald and opal, with the shine
Of rubies intermingled, and dim bars
Of twisting turquoise and pale coralline !
What rings and rounds ! what thin streaks sapphirine
Freckled that gleaming glory, like the bed
Of Eden streams with gems enamellèd !

There lurked no loathing, no soul-freezing fear,
But luxury and love these coils between :
Faint grew the boy ; the siren filled his ear
With singing sweet as when the village-green
Re-echoes to the tinkling tambourine,
And feet of girls aglow with laughter glance
In myriad mazy errors of the dance.

How long he dallied with delusive joy
I know not : but thereafter never more
The peace of passionless slumber soothed the boy ;
For he was stricken to the very core
With sickness of desire exceeding sore,
And through the radiance of his eyes there shone
Consuming fire too fierce to gaze upon.

He, ere he died—and they whom lips divine
Have touched, fade flower-like and cease to be—
Bade Charicles on agate carve a sign
Of his strange slumber : therefore can we see
Here in the ruddy gem's transparency
The boy, the myrtle boughs, the triple spell
Of moth and snake and white witch terrible.

III.

*FOR ONE OF GIAN BELLINI'S LITTLE
ANGELS.*

MY task it is to stand beneath the throne,
To stand and wait, while those grave presences,
Prophet and priest and saint and seraph, zone
Our Lady with the Child upon her knees :
They from mild lips receive the messages
Of peace and love, which thence to men below
They shower soft-falling like pure flakes of snow.

I meanwhile wait ; and very mute must be
My music, lest I break the golden trance
Of bliss celestial, or with childish glee
Trouble the fount of divine utterance.
Yet when those lips are tired of speech, perchance
It may be that the royal babe will lie
And slumber to my whispered lullaby :

Then all those mighty brows will rest, and peace
Descend like dew on that high company.
Therefore I stand and wait, but do not cease
To clasp my lute, that silver melody,
When our dear Lady bends her smile on me,
Forth from my throat and from these thrilling strings
Dove-like may soar and spread ethereal wings.

LYRICS OF LIFE.

JOHN ADDINGTON SYMONDS.

I.

ὑποθήκη εἰς ἑμαυτόν.

BACK to thy books! The swift hours spent in vain
Are flown and gone :
Thou hast no charm to lure them, or regain
What loss hath won.

Up from thy sleep! The dream of idle love,
So frail and fair,
Hath vanished, and its golden wings above
Melt in mid air.

Stand not, nor gaze astonished at the skies,
Serenely cold :
They have no answer for thine eager eyes ;
Thy tale is told.

Fool, in all folly cradled, swathed from sense,
To trust a toy ;
To purchase from pronounced indifference
A shallow joy ;

To leave thy studious native heights untrod
For that low soil,
Where momentary blossoms deck the sod ;
To pant and toil

In hungry chasings of the painted fly,
 That fluttered past—
 Back to thy summits, where what cannot die
 Survives the blast!

There, throned in solitary calm, forget
 Who wrung thy heart :
 Long hours and days of silent years may yet
 Restore a part

Of that large heritage and realm sublime,
 Which, love-estate,
 Thou fain would'st barter for the fields that time
 Makes desolate.

II.

χοινὰ τὰ τῶν φίλων.

GIVE freely to the friend thou hast ;
 Unto thyself thou givest :
 On barren soil thou canst not cast,
 For by his life thou livest.

Nay, this alone doth trouble me—
 That I should still be giving
 Through him unto myself, when he
 Is love within me living.

I fain would give to him alone,
 Nor let him guess the giver ;
 Like dews that drop on hills unknown,
 To feed a lordly river.

III.

AFTER TEMPEST.

THE dews of the evening are scattered,
And the woods weep ;
The banners of thunder hang tattered
Over the deep :
Now that the storms are gone,
Why are the heavens wan,
Waiting for sleep ?

Tear-drops of sorrow are falling
From tired eyes :
The depths of the spirit are calling,
Sighs unto sighs :
Yearning is spent,
Passion hath rent
The veil that she lent
To hide the calm skies.

The sweet stars are lying
Bare to the night ;
But one heart is dying
After the fight.
Is there hope, little star,
So faint and so far,
Is there yet any light ?

Down in the valley, oh listen !
Lute-strings are loud :
And lo, where the moon-beams glisten
From the dark cloud !
Soul full of sorrow,
Shadows will fly :
Wait for no morrow ;
Singing is nigh.

LYRICS OF LIFE AND ART.

JOHN ADDINGTON SYMONDS.

I.—LOVE IN DREAMS.

LOVE hath his poppy-wreath,
Not Night alone.
I laid my head beneath
Love's lilied throne :
Then to my sleep he brought
This anodyne—
The flower of many a thought
And fancy fine :
A form, a face, no more ;
Fairer than truth ;
A dream from death's pale shore ;
The soul of youth :
A dream so dear, so deep,
All dreams above,
That still I pray to sleep—
Bring Love back, Love !

II.—FAREWELL.

THOU goest : to what distant place
Wilt thou thy sunlight carry ?
I stay with cold and clouded face :
How long am I to tarry ?
Where'er thou goest, morn will be ;
Thou leavest night and gloom to me.
The night and gloom I can but take ;
I do not grudge thy splendour :
Bid souls of eager men awake ;
Be kind and bright and tender.
Give day to other worlds ; for me
It must suffice to dream of thee.

III.—IN DREAMLAND.

DOWN among the grey green shallows
Runs a cool translucent stream,
Rippling over pebbly shallows
Like the Lethe of Love's dream,
Broadening into pools of amber
Under rocks where wild vines clamber,
And the lilac wind-flowers gleam.

There the turf is smooth and mossy,
Still unshorn and ever new ;
Each young shoot and herblet glossy
Drinks at eve the tender dew :
For no storms assail the garden,
Frosts nor winds the rathe leaves harden,
And the heavens are hazy blue.

On the boughs the quinces mellow
Mid the dim green shades above,
Spheres of purest palest yellow
With the scent that speaks of love ;
Proserpine's pomegranates under
Ripen, redden, fall asunder,
Gem with gold the myrtle grove.

High o'er head sleep-cradled zephyrs
Sway the bay boughs to and fro,
Over meads where milk-white heifers
Knee-deep in the grasses go ;
And where'er the streamlet wanders,
Faint-hued fragrant oleanders
Drop their petals soft as snow.

In a dream Night led me thither,
And I saw assembled here
All the loves that bloom and wither
In our gross terrestrial sphere ;
Mid the myrtles, on the meadows,
All the joys that leave but shadows,
All the days that disappear :

Changed to flowers and very quiet,
Fragrant in perpetual spring,
After life's uneasy riot
Folded under death's broad wing,
Gathered, garnered in a slumber
Which no waking dreams encumber,
Where remembrance hath no sting.

IV.—*LEBENS PHILOSOPHIE.*

IF we were but free to wander
Light as mountain cloud or air ;
If our love grow firmer, fonder,
And our youth were always fair ;
If no thought of sin or scorning
Marred the magic of our morning
If delight expelled despair :

If the dreadful hand of duty
Lay not on our souls like lead ;
If the rose of joy and beauty
Had no thorn wherewith we bled ;
If we could the world refashion
Closer to our own heart's passion,
And resuscitate the dead :

If all ifs were ours for ever ;
If we held fate in our hand ;
If without the least endeavour
We could do whate'er we planned ;—
Tell us, dear ephemeral lovers,
Whom a little black earth covers,
Who at Pluto's footstool stand,

Tell us, could we bear the measure
Of a bliss beyond our sphere ?
Without pain would there be pleasure,
Joy without or hope or fear ?
Youth and beauty, could they thrall us
If old age did not appal us ?
Could we love, if love were clear ?

Life is nought for us, frail mortals,
But through death whereto we tend ;
And we cross the heavenly portals
Only when on earth we bend ;
Only what we lose, we cherish ;
Only pluck the flowers that perish ;
Only what we have not, spend.

This is wisdom : learn to grasp it :
Kiss the fickle hour that flies :
If a joy comes, do not clasp it :
Let the dream above thine eyes
Wave its wings in ether sailing :
So shalt thou dwell unbewailing
Till the sun that sets not, rise.

AN IMPROVISATION ON THE VIOLIN.

Suggested by the records of Beethoven's deafness.

SONATA QUASI UNA FANTASIA.

JOHN ADDINGTON SYMONDS.

O HEART, false heart, why tearest thou me again ?
May not the quick soul-fire be quenched, the fount
Of tears be wasted in the withered eyes ?
Are there yet men for whom my breast must bleed,
My soul be shattered ? Ah ! most pitiless Muse !
Am I not deaf and very old with sorrow ?

Nay, Power implacable ! I heed thee not !
Thou, and thy steadfast eyes and wings that soar
Straight to the centre of the sun—Forbear !
Forbear them ! lest I perish—nay, sweet Queen !
Lest, like some lonely pelican, I feed
My fasting children with life blood and die !

Ah me ! in vain I plead ! Hark how the chords
Come crowding—how like hammer-strokes they fall—
The measured blows of brazen-fingered Fate.
Of brazen-footed Fate the heavy tread,
Of brazen wings the winnowing ! Stroke on stroke,
On the vexed anvil of my soul they throb,
Pauseless. Did thus the Titan groan, whom Zeus
Rove to the houseless rock and gave a prey
To frost and fire and the sharp vulture's beak ?
Did he thus idly wrestle ? Till the dews
Of evening fell, and from the nether mist
Rose maiden choirs of Oceanides

To soothe his sorrow. Even so my soul
Melts with melodious ministration, soothes
Her sorrow in the solace of a song ;
Fitfully floats upon the wings of dreaming,
Flutters and floats. Dim faces of the past,
Dear voices which I heard but hear no more,
The laughter and the love of long ago,
Sphere me with sweetness. But—ah ! woe is me !
Again the chords come crashing ! No, no, no !
The brazen tongue of Fate, the trumpet-tongue,
Scornfully—through the chambers of my brain
Blown like a crack of doom—scatters the dream,
And slays me ! Now the trampling of swift steeds—
Now the sharp clangour of the jarring car :—
Where will ye whirl me ? Flames around the wheels
Bicker, and iron hooves on flinty ways
Strike sparks : I feel the fury of strong winds !
Ay ! combat ; toss me down the sleety surge ;
Sustain and slacken ; buffet me with blows ;—
I can endure. Mid-ways the stars are rolled
In azure, and the solemn night rides clear.
I mark the billows of high hilltops laid
Beneath me : on the dark, as on a sea,
Forward I sail. The tumult and the din
Die downward : but soul-terror, like a spell,
Broods on this solitude. The leaden chords
Fall one by one, like raindrops, when a storm
Weeps out her last low sob and down the hills
Draws early twilight. Hush ! what sounds are these ?
Rustling of leaves on beechen boughs and birch
And branches of green oak. Athwart them glides
Clear summer sunlight, and a breeze above
Sings summer-laden with fresh scent of flowers.
The woodland laughs, and peeping faces peer,

Faunlike or Satyrlike ! Even so I strayed,
Years since, through forest-aisles, and sang ; while yet
The hours flew not uncomforted of song,
Nor on insensible ears this veil had fallen
Deadening like drifted snow the feet of sound.
Ah ! dark and lonely—very lone and dark—
Shut out, ah me ! from human speech, my soul
Pines like a banished thing of shame apart,
Mourns like an orphan ! Yea, when cities ring,
Wrought by my melodies to rapture, I,
Their maker, through the symphonies and hymns,
Through the triumphant trumpet-clang and wail
Of passionate viols and pathetic flutes,
Sit, see the tears that flow, the earnest eyes,
The fiery souls forth-gazing—sit unmoved,
Of all those eager and impetuous crowds
Passionless alone and cold—except for sorrow !

Yet even thus I triumph ! Even thus,
Through silence and dark dungeon-hours unsunned,
With thee, thou prisonless angel, soul of song,
That seekest not for sound of pipe or flute,
Or resonant tube, or human voice divine,
I commune ! Thou dost visit me and wave
Thy wings harmonious at the bars that seal
My cell, painting with splendour the dull walls !

So mused the master ; while, as if in wrath,
The vexed reverberations of his viol,
Fitfully stricken, like a lute that lies
Forgotten by some window-chink and bears
The rude caresses of the wandering wind,
Flung to the void tones dissonantly jangled,
With here a shuddering shriek, and here a discord,

Sharp as the rasped teeth of a rusty saw,
Wrenched from the scrannel strings. Yet that great soul
Lay pent within close prison walls, nor heard
How the racked viol, like a tortured fiend,
Made music unmelodious ; but heard
The everlasting harmonies, and through
The sphery regions of sidereal song
Voyaged ; his large eyes vacant, and his brow
Bent with its weight of curls upon the bow.

POEMS ON GREEK THEMES.

JOHN ADDINGTON SYMONDS.

I.

THE SACRIFICE.

A FRAGMENT.

DAWN whitened—for it was midsummer dawn—
O'er dim Pentelicus. The sleep that lay
On those two lovers, melted like a mist,
Leaving their spirits bare beneath the skies
Of lofty purpose. Nor to flinch or fail
Was theirs. But, having bathed pure limbs, they stepped
Into the stirless city-streets, the arm
Of brave Cratinus round the sinewy girth
Of his tall comrade twining. So they moved ;
And morning grew around them, with a press
And pulse of coming glory, ever more
Flame-pure from base to zenith of clear skies ;
Till by the cell of Epimenides
Standing, they saw the golden face upraised
Of Phœbus ; and the pale priest welcomed them
With : " Hail, thrice hail ! beloved of heaven, the sons
Of Athens, and her saviours, who have dared
Thus in her sorest need, at price of pain
And laughter lost in death, to purchase honour !
Assume the robe of sacrifice ; the crown
Of innocent flowers, for you by fate foreseen,
On locks of youth and manhood's crispy curls
Lay joyfully : for lo, the elders sound,—

Hark, in the porches and the paths beneath,—
 Your triumph, and a breathless people throngs
 The marble temple-steps to greet with blessings
 Their heroes !” They as in a dream beheld
 The lengthening light, which ne’er for them should flame
 To noon ; the sweet Ionian vowels heard
 Of youths and maids ; the loved warm life within
 Drank, dying. Then the long procession moved
 Around them—earnest eyes, and sobs, and feet
 That faltered on the pavement ; praying men,
 And tearful women ; music, and the scent
 Of summer morning ; bees that drowsily
 Flew by with honey burden of full hives ;
 All dear familiar things transformed and hallowed ;
 The awful shrine, the altar, and the knife !—
 Thus, as they lay, and death drew near, a sound
 Swelled in their ears of singing, and they slept.

II.

ART IS LOVE.

Scene : THE LESCHE AT DELPHI.

Speakers : POLYGNOTUS the Painter, and THERON, Tyrant
 of Agrigentum.

Ther. TEACH me, friend Polygnotus, what is Art.

Pol. This craft of mine, sire ; that of Pheidias ;
 Or that of Damon or the Theban lyrist.

Ther. Nay, but I asked thee not to tell the tale
 Of men and of their labours. Prithee, say
 What power is it that works in thee and them
 Compelling worship.

Pol. Haply 'tis some god.

Ther. Ay, Polygnotus : but what god ? We see
Thought, skill, strength, passion, industry that
makes

Men like to gods in labour, for no end
Of use or profit spent, but to delight
The soul with shadows of her highest striving ;
The fruit whereof is art. What thing then is it
Which without service of man's need is set
As the high goal whereto man's spirit striveth ?

Pol. I am, O king, a craftsman, skilled to make,
Unskilled to speak : yet listen ; Art is Love.

Ther. Love, sayest thou ? Love, who from the
clash of things
Created order, or that laughing boy
Who sleeps on cheeks of maidens and of youths
Drowned in day-dreaming ?

Pol. Yea, 'tis Love I mean :
But of his lineage I would have you learn
What poets have kept hidden. They pretend
Love is a god, young, fair, desirable,
Fulfilled of sweetness and self-satisfied,
Treading the smooth paths of luxurious spirits.
Not thus I know him ; for methinks, he hungers
Full oftentimes and thirsts, yearning to clasp
The softness, tenderness, and grace he hath not.
He was begotten, as old prophets tell me,
At the birth-feast of Beauty by a slave,
Invention, on a beggar, Poverty ;
Therefore he serves all fair things, and doth hold
From his dame nothing, from his father wit
Whate'er he lacks to win.

Ther. You speak in riddles :
Not thus have Hesiod and blind Homer sung him.

Pol. Nathless 'tis true: and Art, whereby men
mould
Bronze into breathing limbs, or round these lines
With hues delusive, or join verse to verse,
Or wed close-married sounds in hymn and chorus,
Is Love; poor Love that lacks, strong Love that
conquers;
Love like a tempest bending to his will
The heart and brain and sinews of the maker,
Who, having nought, seeks all, and hath by seeking.
Look now: the artist is not soft or young,
Supple or sleek as girls and athletes are,
But blind like Homer, like Hephaistos lame.
True child of Poverty, he feels how scant
Is the world round him; and he fain would fashion
A fairer world for his free soul to breathe in.
The strife between what is and what he covets,
Stings him to yearning; till his father, Craft,
Cries—Stretch thy hand forth, take thy fill, and furnish
Thy craving soul with all for which she clamours.

Ther. Is it so easy then to win the prize
You artists play for? I, a king, find Love
A hard task-master.

Pol. Ay, and so is Art.
Many a painter through the long night watches
Till frozen day-spring hath lain tired with waiting
At his dream's door-step, watering the porch
With tears, suspending rose-wreaths from the lintel,
Thrice blest if but the form he woos be willing
To kiss his cold lips in the blush of morning.
And though that kiss be given, even then,
Mid that supreme beatitude, there lingers
An aching want—a sense of something missed—
Secluded, cloud involved, and unattained—

The melody that neither flute nor lyre,
Through breath of maidens or sharp smitten strings,
Hath rendered. See how Art is like to Love !
For lovers, though they mingle, though close lips
To lips be wedded, hair with streaming hair
And limb with straining limb be interwoven,
Yet are their souls divided ; yet their flesh
Aches separate and unassuaged, desiring
What none shall win, that supreme touch whereby
Of two be made one being. Even so
In art we clasp the shape imperishable
Of beauty, clasp and kiss and cling and quiver ;
While, far withdrawn, the final full fruition,
The melting of our spirit in the shape
She woos, still waits :—a want no words can fathom.
Thus Art is Love. And, prithee, when was lover
Or artist owner of fat lands and rents ?
Poor are they both and prodigal ; yet mighty ;
And both must suffer.—I have heard, O king,
The pearls your mistress wears upon her sleeve,
Are but the product of an oyster's pain.
Between its two great shells the creature lies
Storing up strength and careless, till a thorn
Driven by deft fingers probes the hinge that joins
Well-fitting wall to wall ; the poor fish pines,
Writhes, pours thin ichor forth, and well nigh drains
His substance : when at last the wound is healed,
A pearl lurks glistening in the pierced shell.
See now your artist : were there no quick pain,
How should the life-blood of his heart be given
To make those pearls called poems, pictures, statues ?
Ther. Are lovers oysters then as well as artists ?—
Nay, prithee, brook the jest ! I take your meaning.

THE LOVE TALE OF ODATIS AND PRINCE ZARIADRES.

JOHN ADDINGTON SYMONDS.

THE DREAM OF ODATIS.

ODATIS, daughter of the Scythian king,
Lay in her ivory chamber wondering
What pleasant sight the morrow's sun would bear
To make the April of her life more fair.
Then as she thought thereon her lashes fell
Over her grey eyes, and she slumbered well;
Nor dreamed therewith; but when the moon outworn
Waned on the pearly limits of the morn,
Then through her sleep the flocks of dreams like rain
Fell on her troubled sense and stirred her brain.
And first through many a twilight labyrinth
Of starry wind-flower and wild hyacinth
Listless she wandered, and the heaven o'erhead
Was to her soul a prison blank and dead;
Nor heard she sound of song, nor was the earth
For all the brightness of its bloomy birth
Glad to her eyes; but all she looked upon
Seemed as the face of one with sorrow wan.
Yet even so the vision changed: the wood
Faded from out her memory, and she stood
In purple princely splendour throned on high
To watch the pomp of armies marching by;
And in her breast her heart leaped, for the show
Filled her with trembling such as lovers know.

And first came youths upon the flowery way
 Thick strewn with silk and boughs of conquering bay ;
 Garlands they wore of violets, and their eyes
 Sparkled like stars that stud December skies,
 While with puffed cheeks and lips whereon the down
 Of boyhood lingered, through the startled town
 They blew the silver sound of clarions wreathed
 Into strange circles serpentine, or breathed
 Through flutes melodious heraldings whereby
 Trembling the maiden felt that Love was nigh.
 Nor might she pause to think ; for now the tread
 Of elephants with vine leaves garlanded
 Went crushing blossoms with huge feet ; their grey
 Lithe trunks were curled to snuff the scents of May,
 And on their castled backs and shoulders vast
 Flamed cressets ; on the live coals negroes cast
 Spices of myrrh and frankincense, and boys
 Like naked Cupids made a merry noise
 Swinging from flank and dewlap, showering spray
 Of cakes and comfits from gilt quivers gay.
 Next came the priests, intoning as they went
 Praises and prayers—their dusky foreheads bent
 Beneath the weight of mitres stiff with gems ;
 And on their breasts and on the broidered hems
 Of their loose raiment glittered runes that none
 Might read, so far ago in ages gone
 By men whose very memories are flown
 Were those strange legends wrought in tongues
 unknown.

Behind them followed oxen white as snow,
 Large limbed, with meek eyes wild and round and slow ;
 Lowing they went, and girls beside them held
 Red rosewreaths on their necks and shoulders belled
 With golden bubbles. After, in long line,

Passed princely youths on horses ; red as wine
Was all their raiment, and the steeds they rode
Like thunder-clouds in tawny splendour glowed.
Ah ! then she trembled ! on her soul there fell
Even in dreams a swift fire terrible !
For towering o'er the brows of all that band,
Throned on a car, guiding great steeds, did stand
One who with fixed eyes gazed on only her :
And as he drew anigh, still goodlier
Than all those youths he shone ; and still more near,
Her spirit shivered with delicious fear ;
For on her face his eyes stayed, and his breast,
Whiter than moonlight, heaved with wild unrest ;
And all about his brows and glorious eyes
The golden tresses gleamed like live sunrise ;
And as at last beneath her seat he came,
She heard the heralds shout an unknown name—
Prince Zariadres !—and he rose, and she
Dared not or could not shrink, for utterly
Her soul with love was shattered, and his mouth,
Panting, half open, dry with eager drowth,
Disclosed beneath her lips ; and so it seemed
That even as she struggled and still dreamed,
That show and all those sights faded, and he
With strong arms clasping strained her stormfully
To his broad bosom.—Then she woke, and wan
With joy, still felt his living mouth upon
Her quivering lips ; and lo ! the dream was gone !

AMONG THE MOUNTAINS.

JOHN ADDINGTON SYMONDS.

THE CROCUS AND THE SOLDANELLA.

WHEREVER on the untrodden Alps
The snows begin to fade,
And frozen streams to leap again
Beneath the pine-tree shade ;
While still the grass is brown and dead
With its long winter sleep,
And leafless shrubs their withered arms
Stretch down the barren steep;
Then here and there two little flowers,
Like lights of earliest morn,
Or rays of hope in sorrow seen,
Shine on the slopes forlorn.
They break the snow with gentle force
And struggle toward the sun :
The chilly wreaths around them melt,
The streams beneath them run.
The dull old earth feels young again,
So fresh and bright they peer,
Pale pearly cups and lilac bells,
Crying " The spring is here."
But when the snows have died and flown
Like spirits to the sky,
In shape of fleecy summer clouds
That on the mountains lie ;

When on the cool green fields the grass
Grows deeper day by day ;
And all the troops of laughing flowers
Make rock and meadow gay ;
Then you may look in vain to find
These first frail buds of spring :
The month that quickens all to life
Hath watched their withering.
They broke the frozen winter snow,
And spake the first good morrow ;
They bade us be of better cheer
When we were dulled with sorrow.
Now they must die and droop away :
Their very graves ignore them ;
Fresh leaves and gaudy blossoms wave
Above the slopes that bore them.
Only where here and there the snows
Of avalanches linger,
And Winter on a gloomy dell
Lays his cold lifeless finger ;
There still secluded from the wealth
Of happier fields they blow,
Blooming and fading hour by hour
Near the retreating snow.
They bloom and fade, and do not shrink
From their appointed duty ;
To show the path that June must tread
But not to share her beauty ;
To live their short lives on the brink
Of death, and then to perish,
Between the chill snow and the sun
That burns but does not cherish.
Die, little flowers, but not unwept
Nor yet unhonoured die :

Like you dawn's herald star doth fade
From the dim morning sky ;
Like you the great and good and wise,
The first of those who woke
From sleeps of ignorance and through
The snows of ages broke,
Sank, having done their work, nor saw
The summer they foretold—
Glad flowers and grasses o'er them wave,
Blue, crimson, green, and gold.

SONNETS.

JOHN ADDINGTON SYMONDS.

AMONG THE MOUNTAINS.

WINTER NIGHTS IN THE HIGH ALPS.

I.

NOTES of a mute, not melancholy world,
A world of snows and darkness and moon-sheen
Of still crystalline air and stars serene,
And stationary pines in slumber furled :
Notes of the sober night, when drift is whirled
By tireless winds over the solemn scene,
When the lake-pavement groans, and mists between
The shadowy mountain tops are coldly curled :
Notes of a meditative man who walks
Those white fields and that ice-floor all alone,
Yet draws warm life from winter's frozen wells :
Notes of a soul that most divinely talks
Unto herself in silence, and hath known
The God that in the mystic moon-world dwells.

II.

I send them to you, friends, whose feet are far,
Moving upon a loved and populous land
In sweet society and mutual band
Of fellowship, star linked to breathing star!
Fain would I sometimes be where pictures are,
And music, and the clasp of hand to hand ;
Where men I love with loveliest women stand,
And theatres their wonder-world unbar ;
Where London's eddying ocean on its surge
Tosses the thunder of souls armed for strife,
And streets, aflame all night, with forceful urge
Of multitudes in conflict quicken life ;
Where chaff from wheat of hearts keen passions purge,
And each tense hour with throes of fate is rife.

III.

With you I may not dwell. Yet man is great ;
And the mind triumphs over place and time :
I therefore, doomed to weave my lonely rhyme,
Here 'mid these pines, these moon-scenes desolate,
Have found therein a joy that mocks at fate ;
And stationed on a specular mount sublime,
Have scanned yon fields low-lying, whence I climb
To commune with the stars inviolate.
The sempiternal stars, the flawless snows,
The crystal gems fashioned by art of frost,
The thin pure wind that whence it listeth blows,
The solitude whereon the soul is tossed
In contemplation of the world's huge woes ;
These things suffice. Life's labour is not lost.

IV.

Friends have I found here too : this peasant folk,
Comradely, frank, athletic ; men who draw
Their lineage from a race that never saw
Fear on the field, but with firm sinewy stroke
Those knightly ranks, Burgundian, Austrian, broke,
And bade the Italian tyrant far withdraw ;
These vales, these hills have known no lord but law
Since Freedom for this people first awoke.
Their joys austere, their frugal style be mine ;
Low houses builded of the rude rough stone,
Rafted and panelled with smooth native pine ;
Here let me rest heart-whole, nor rest alone ;
High thoughts be my companions ; words divine
Of poets ; these are still the spirit's own.

MISCELLANEOUS.

I.—THE GRAVE OF OMAR KHAYYAM.

OMAR KHAYYAM, in life's calm eventide,
Walking his garden on a night of June
With one whose youth shone like the rising moon,
Murmured these words: "When earth on either side
Shall clasp this breathing clay, the potter's pride;
When all these songs are silenced, soon, too soon;
Then shall red rose-leaves, morning, night, and noon,
Blown by North-winds, the dust of Omar hide."
Listened the youth, and wondered: yet, being sure
No wise man's words like snow-flakes melt in vain,
After long years, with eld's slow steps, again
Turning toward Omar's home in Naishapûr,
He sought that tomb, but found, by wild winds blown,
Drift of red rose-leaves, deep on a hidden stone.

II.—A SISTER OF THE POOR.

KNEW you this lady? She was one whom God
Loved greatly; yet the proud ones of the land
Eyed her askance, what time rough paths she trod
And wild waste places, with an angel's hand
Soothing intolerable anguish. Men
By maddening fever fretted, orphans thrown
Like fruit untimely on the barren stone
Of city streets, babes in the stifling den
Of crime and famine to her bosom pressed—
These knew her. As a folded lily keeps
Whiteness unstained on stony Alpine steeps,
Even so this maiden in the festering nest
Of sin and sickness blossomed. Now she sleeps
Pure with the pure, and with the saints at rest.

III.—O SI, O SI, OTIOSI.

OH that the waters of oblivion
Might purge the burdened soul of her life's dross,
Cleansing dark overgrowths that dull the gloss
Wherewith that pristine gold so purely shone !
Oh that some spell might make us dream undone
Those deeds that fret our pillow, when we toss
Racked by the torments of that living cross
Where memory frowns, a grim centurion !
Sleep, the kind soother of our bodily smart,
Is bought and sold by scales-weight ; quivering nerves
Sink into slumber when the hand of art
Hath touched some hidden spring of brain or heart ;
But for the tainted will no medicine serves ;
The road from sin to suffering never swerves.

IV.—TO PROMETHEUS.

OH, thou who sole 'neath heaven's impiteous stars,
Chained to thy crucifix on those fierce fells,
Pierced by the pendent spikes of icicles,
Quailest beneath the world-wind's scimitars ;
Thou on whose wrinkling forehead delved with scars
Unnumbered ages score time's parallels ;
Deep in whose heart sin's deathless vulture dwells
Who on the low earth's liminary bars
Seest suns rise, suns set, ascending signs
And signs descending through æonian years ;
Still uncompanied save by dreams and fears,
Still stayed by hope deferred that ne'er declines ;
Oh, thou, Prometheus, protomartyr, thus
Teach man to dree life's doom on Caucasus !

V.—THE CHORISTER.

SNOW on the high-pitched minster roof and spire :
Snow on the boughs of leafless linden trees :
Snow on the silent streets and squares that freeze
Under night's wing down-drooping nigh and nigher.
Inside the church, within the shadowy choir,
Dim burn the lamps like lights on vaporous seas ;
Drowsed are the voices of droned litanies ;
Blurred as in dreams the face of priest and friar.
Cold hath numbed sense to slumber here ! But hark,
One swift soprano, soaring like a lark,
Startles the stillness ; throbs that soul of fire,
Beats around arch and aisle, floods echoing dark
With exquisite aspiration ; higher, higher,
Yearns in sharp anguish of untold desire !

VI.—A DREAM OF BURIAL IN MID-OCEAN.

DOWN through the deep deep grey-green seas, in sleep
Plunged my drowsed soul ; and ever on and on
Hurrying at first, then where the faint light shone
Through fathoms twelve, with slackening fall did creep
Nor touched the bottom of that bottomless steep,
But with a slow sustained suspension,
Buoyed 'mid the watery wildernesses wan,
Like a thin cloud in air, voyaged the deep.
Then all those dreadful faces of the sea,
Horned things abhorred and shapes intolerable,
Fixing glazed lidless eyes swam up to me,
And pushed me with their snouts, and coiled and fell
In spiral volumes writhing horribly—
Jagged fins grotesque, fanged ghastly jaws of hell.

Robert Buchanan.

1841—1901.

HAD Robert Buchanan added to his other laurels those of a politician and orator he would have rivalled the versatility of the first Lord Lytton, who was surely the most variously endowed Englishman of his time.

As it was he made his mark as poet, novelist, biographer—his sketch of David Gray is a delightful piece of biographical work—essayist, critic, and playwright; and if it cannot truly be said of him, as it was said of Goldsmith, that he touched nothing which he did not adorn, it may be declared by the most exacting critic that in every kind of intellectual labour to which he put his hand he, somewhere or other, left an impress which no seeing eye can mistake for anything but the sign manual of genius.

And yet, curiously enough, while he was essentially a poet, and a novelist, playwright, and the rest only, as it were, *par hasard*, the work which is most characteristic, most truly his, has obtained recognition noticeably scanty when compared with that accorded to the other work which speaks of a talent rather than of a personality. His novels good and bad—and he produced both—have been read by thousands; night after night his plays have been greeted with the applause of crowded houses; but his poetry, though

it has numerous and warm admirers, cannot be said to have even yet caught the ear of the "great reading public,"—a fact all the more curious because, as will speedily be seen, his verse, while possessing many of the higher poetical qualities which will always appeal exclusively to the few, is peculiarly rich in other qualities which are in the best sense of the word popular.

Yet, strange as it is, it is certainly true that numbers of readers who could stand a fairly rigorous examination in Browning, Tennyson, or Matthew Arnold, will confess that Robert Buchanan is known to them only by "Phil Blood's Leap," "The Wedding of Shon Maclean," or possibly also by "St. Abe and his Seven Wives."

Robert Buchanan was born August 18th, 1841, his father being proprietor of a Glasgow newspaper, a journalist, and a writer on themes other than those covered by ordinary journalism. Nurtured thus in a semi-literary atmosphere, the youth seems to have shown a strong impulse towards the imaginative expression of himself in verse,—an impulse which must have been indefinitely strengthened and stimulated by an ardent friendship he had formed with a somewhat older but still young Scottish poet, David Gray.

The story of this friendship Buchanan has told in pathetic prose; his grief for the loss of his friend, too soon laid low, he has celebrated in eloquent and tender verse:—here, where elaborate detail of biographical record is impossible, it must suffice to say that in the spring of 1860 the two lads—for they were little more—took flight to London, that great metropolis of letters, confident of their ability to "cultivate

literature on a little oatmeal," if no better fare were procurable.

Gray left London only to die; Robert Buchanan remained to struggle, and for long the struggle was a hard one, though in the year just mentioned he achieved the publication of "*Undertones*," his first book of verse. This was followed in 1865 by "*Idyls and Legends of Inverburn*," and in 1866 by the "*London Poems*," two volumes in which the note of individuality was much more clearly discernible than in the earlier efforts, which, though full of promise, were of necessity tentative and, in a less degree, imitative as well.

During the intervening years the poet was largely occupied by prose and verse contributions to various periodicals, notably to the magazines published by Mr. A. Strahan, who was doubtless drawn to a brother Scot.

But by this time Robert Buchanan had impressed himself on *a* public if not on *the* public; and works of poetry and criticism, mainly the former, followed each other in rapid succession. The growth of his reputation was probably interrupted by his unfortunate article on "*The Fleshly School of Poetry*" (1871), and of his material prosperity by a luckless adventure in journalism; but he speedily regained lost ground.

In 1876 appeared his novel "*The Shadow of the Sword*," an impressive romance which has had many successors, though perhaps not more than one that is really worthy of it; and in later years he won fame in other than purely literary circles by various successful plays, the most popular of which were his effective adaptations to histrionic ends of certain famous

eighteenth-century novels. Even this did not absorb all his intellectual energies, for from time to time he enriched contemporary literature by the publication of a new volume of verse; and the appearance in 1889 of an important poem, "The City of Dream," provided sufficing evidence of his fidelity to what was certainly his true vocation.

When a critic in attempting an estimate of the work of any literary producer performs his task under conditions which render brevity essential, he will, if he be wise, endeavour to concentrate his attention upon the special element in that work, or the special portion of it, which is so strongly individualised as to be more or less recognisably unique. Uniqueness is not in itself a valuable quality, for it may be achieved by whim, perversity, affectation, or even simple ignorance; but when other qualities intrinsically valuable are unique or even rare, their uniqueness or rarity gives to them an added extrinsic worth. In a complete survey of Robert Buchanan's work the question needing an answer would be, "What has he done?" In this survey which, in the nature of things, cannot be exhaustive, the critic must fain be content to answer as best he can the narrower, but hardly less interesting question, "What has he done that no one else has done at all, or done quite so well, or quite in the same way?" Now, in his verse, not less than in his total literary product, Robert Buchanan displayed such versatility of endowment that any answer to such question—involving, as it must, a selection and an exclusion—will needs have a look of arbitrariness or dogmatism; but this is an unavoidable misfortune, and in this place all proper

dubitations, qualifications, and reserves must be taken for granted. Be it said, then,—without any implied depreciation of his longer narrative poems,—whether like “Balder” they possess a spiritual significance, or, like “White Rose and Red,” dispense with it; of such dramatic or semi-dramatic performances as “Political Mystics” and “Saint Abe;” of those re-incarnations of the old ballad spirit, of which “The Lights of Leith” is an impressive example, or of his sonnets and miscellaneous lyrics, which vary much in individuality of treatment, but are often of rare beauty—that the work of Robert Buchanan, which must be put in evidence when the critic makes his reply to the postulated question, is to be found partly in the “London Poems” and in other pieces devoted to the homely or terrible realities of the life of the poor, and partly in those remarkable examples of imaginative mysticism most adequately represented by the contents of “The Book of Orm, the Celt.”

In his choice of subjects for the majority of the “London Poems,” it may be frankly admitted that Buchanan followed the lead of Wordsworth, who in the early days of the 19th century had sought “the huts where poor men lie,” and had succeeded in idealising the most apparently unpromising material, not by ignoring or tampering with prosaic details, but by exhibiting them in front of a moral or emotional background suffused with a light which transfigured and glorified them. Wordsworth, however, had an advantage over the later poet, inasmuch as his poems of the poor were exclusively or mainly rural idyls. The lowliest life spent in the country, howsoever prosaic in itself, is lived in

an atmosphere which is essentially and obviously poetic; and for the singer of cottage domesticities the ground is, as it were, prepared. The poet of lowly town life has no such preparatory assistance. He has to mould to his purpose not merely material which is apparently non-poetic, but material which is clearly anti-poetic; he has to deal with not merely life made unlovely, but with life vulgarised, and it was in setting himself to this task that Buchanan won the honours of the successful pioneer. It is not, however, the writer's theme, but his treatment of it, which sets these poems in a place apart. Years before Buchanan was born Thomas Hood had sung of the suicide of an "unfortunate," and by so singing had triumphantly defied the old traditions of poetical responsibility. Still, in the midst of the defiance there was a suggestion of compromise. Hood did not dare to be quite true to the actual, and the picture was accordingly touched up. We know that any picture of such a subject as that treated in "The Bridge of Sighs," in which there appears "only the beautiful," is not simply an idealisation, but a transformation of reality; and while true idealisation enhances, this false idealisation detracts from the value of any work of art in which it is found. There are two errors, into one of which those poets who deal with homely human themes are peculiarly liable to fall. The first is that of men who, like Hood, preserve the poetry by keeping back some of the truth; the second is that of a writer like Crabbe, who lets us see all the truth, but seems unable to show us the underlying poetry. There are few men who in delineating the wastes and morasses of the human landscape can give us

both *Dichtung* and *Wahrheit*, but the name of one of the few is Robert Buchanan. Such a poem as "Nell," in which the mother who is not a wife pours out her agonised lamentation for the lover who dies upon the scaffold, or "Liz," with its pathetic and penetratively truthful recital of the poor girl's day in the country,—a memory not of delight but of terror—would in itself suffice to indicate the presence of a poet with that catholicity and virility of imagination which subjects the "shows of things" to the "desires of the mind," not by the timorous handling of eclecticism, but by the vigorous grasp of the athlete who wrestles with things evil and ugly, and will not let them go until they whisper their secret of beauty.

It is not often that the work of any single poet provides such a marked change of atmosphere as that of which we are conscious when we pass from the "London Poems" to "The Book of Orm, the Celt." It is a passage from all hateful tangibilities of sense to all lovely phantoms of vision, from Seven Dials to the Seventh Heaven; and yet we know that between the two products of the one mind there can be no breach of personal continuity,—that an adequate synthesis would exhibit them in equally obvious and inevitable relations to their source. Nor, indeed, to the careful student are these relations obscure or difficult of discernment. In the "London Poems" the most perplexing problems are simply propounded in those concrete forms which show them in their very nakedness of perplexity. In "The Book of Orm," there is—not a solution of them: *that* were too much to expect; but an instinctive outgoing of the spirit in the only

direction in which it feels that a solution may possibly be found. From the "First Song of the Veil," in which we read,—

"How God in the beginning drew
Over His face the Veil of Blue,"—

we are led through the "Songs of Corruption" and the "Songs of Seeking," through the sections entitled "The Man and the Shadow," "The Lifting of the Veil," and that most fascinating series of poems, "The Devil's Mystics," to that marvellous "Vision of the Man Accurst," which is to all that has gone before it at once a climax and an interpretation. The veil has been drawn not merely before the arcana of the methods of nature, but before the secret things of divine providence,—before that most wonderful secret of all, the mystery of redemption by love. In this final vision we are again in the region of the concrete. The man who is lifted by the wild wind and whirled away from the heavenly gate to the dark shore of the under world where he lies alone and shivering, crying only for

"A face to look upon, a heart that beats,
A hand to touch,"—

is, in all human essentials a figure who might have filled the central place in one of the "London Poems." It is only the conditions that are reversed. In the earlier book we are before the veil; in the later book we are behind it, and to the emancipated imagination of the poet are disclosed the living forces which work for salvation in that inner light which to the eye of sense is but darkness. Perhaps for most readers the best way of studying this

volume of mystical utterances would be to read the last poem first; as in it the informing idea of the whole work is seen free from the symbolism which, though to certain races—and to certain minds in every race—the most natural mode of presenting an abstract thought, is to the average Englishman a hindrance rather than a help. If this method be adopted the significance of the book can hardly be missed by the most matter-of-fact reader. It is a vindication of that higher optimism which does not content itself with the sanguine and illogical fatalism of the maxim “whatever is, is right,” but only with an assured faith in a Being whose existence provides a guarantee that the being which *is*, and which is at the same time recognised as *evil*, must be doomed to ultimate destruction. This is the plea itself; and the force of its emotional logic lies in the fact that the apparent incredibility of the conception of a prevailing goodness is frankly admitted,—is indeed insisted upon through all the poems and passages which are burdened with the symbolism of the veil; and that yet, notwithstanding this insistence, we are left with an assurance of faith akin to that rapture which inspired the celebrated saying of Tertullian, *certum quia impossibile est*.

The few representative selections from Robert Buchanan's work, which will be found in the following pages, suffice to make manifest the scant justice which has been done here to the fecundity of his imagination and the range of his vision. Picturresqueness, humour, keenness of observation, felicity of fancy, vigour of thought, and variety of melody are all present in his verse; but it has seemed well to lay special stress upon the spiritual vision which

discerns the divine in the human—which sees in the lost souls of Judas Iscariot, the nameless “man accurst,” and Ratcliffe Meg, the “tigress-woman,”—

“A spark that grows in the dark ;
A spark that burns in the brain ;
Spite of the curse and the stain ;
Over the sea and the plain,
And in street and lane.”

JAMES ASHCROFT NOBLE.

Robert Buchanan died on the 10th of June, 1901.

IDYLS AND LEGENDS OF INVERBURN.

1865.

ROBERT BUCHANAN.

THE DEAD MOTHER.

I.

AS I lay asleep, as I lay asleep,
Under the grass as I lay so deep,
As I lay asleep in my cotton serk
Under the shade of Our Lady's Kirk,
I waken'd up in the dead of night,
I waken'd up in my death-serk white,
And I heard a cry from far away,
And I knew the voice of my daughter May :
' Mother, mother, come hither to me !
Mother, mother, come hither and see !
Mother, mother, mother dear,
Another mother is sitting here :
My body is bruised, and in pain I cry,
On straw in the dark afraid I lie,
I thirst and hunger for drink and meat,
And mother, mother, to sleep were sweet !'
I heard the cry, though my grave was deep,
And awoke from sleep, and awoke from sleep.

II.

I awoke from sleep, I awoke from sleep,
Up I rose from my grave so deep !
The earth was black, but overhead
The stars were yellow, the moon was red ;

And I walk'd along all white and thin,
And lifted the latch and enter'd in,
And reach'd the chamber as dark as night,
And though it was dark my face was white :
' Mother, mother, I look on thee !
Mother, mother, you frighten me !
For your cheeks are thin and your hair is gray !"
But I smiled, and kiss'd her fears away ;
I smooth'd her hair and I sang a song,
And on my knee I rock'd her long :
' O mother, mother, sing low to me—
I am sleepy now, and I cannot see !'
I kiss'd her, but I could not weep,
And she went to sleep, she went to sleep.

III.

As we lay asleep, as we lay asleep,
My May and I, in our grave so deep,
As we lay asleep in the midnight mirk,
Under the shade of our Lady's Kirk,
I waken'd up in the dead of night.
Though May my daughter lay warm and white,
And I heard the cry of a little one,
And I knew 'twas the voice of Hugh my son :
' Mother, mother, come hither to me !
Mother, mother, come hither and see !
Mother, mother, mother dear,
Another mother is sitting here :
My body is bruised and my heart is sad,
But I speak my mind and call them bad ;
I thirst and hunger night and day,
And were I strong I would fly away !'
I heard the cry though my grave was deep,
And awoke from sleep, and awoke from sleep.

IV.

I awoke from sleep, I awoke from sleep,
Up I rose from my grave so deep,
The earth was black, but overhead
The stars were yellow, the moon was red ;
And I walked along all white and thin,
And lifted the latch and enter'd in.
' Mother, mother, and art thou here ?
I know your face, and I feel no fear ;
Raise me, mother, and kiss my cheek,
For oh I am weary and sore and weak.'
I smooth'd his hair with a mother's joy,
And he laugh'd aloud, my own brave boy ;
I raised and held him on my breast,
Sang him a song, and bade him rest.
' Mother, mother, sing low to me—
I am sleepy now, and I cannot see !'
I kiss'd him, and I could not weep,
As he went to sleep, as he went to sleep.

V.

As I lay asleep, as I lay asleep,
With my girl and boy in my grave so deep,
As I lay asleep, I awoke in fear,
Awoke, but awoke not my children dear,
And heard a cry so low and weak
From a tiny voice that could not speak ;
I heard the cry of a little one,
My bairn that could neither talk nor run,
My little, little one, uncaress'd,
Starving for lack of the milk of the breast ;
And I rose from sleep and enter'd in,
And found my little one pinch'd and thin,

And croon'd a song and hush'd its moan,
And put its lips to my white breast-bone ;
And the red, red moon that lit the place
Went white to look at the little face,
And I kiss'd, and kiss'd and I could not weep,
As it went to sleep, as it went to sleep.

VI.

As it lay asleep, as it lay asleep,
I set it down in the darkness deep,
Smooth'd its limbs and laid it out,
And drew the curtains round about ;
Then into the dark, dark room I hied,
Where he lay awake at the woman's side,
And though the chamber was black as night,
He saw my face, for it was so white ;
I gazed in his eyes, and he shriek'd in pain,
And I knew he would never sleep again,
And back to my grave went silently,
And soon my baby was brought to me ;
My son and daughter beside me rest,
My little baby is on my breast ;
Our bed is warm and our grave is deep,
But he cannot sleep, he cannot sleep !

LONDON POEMS.

1866—70.

ROBERT BUCHANAN.

I.

ARTIST AND MODEL :

A LOVE POEM.

The scorn of the nations is bitter,
But the touch of a hand is warm.

IS it not pleasant to wander
In town on Saturday night,
While people go hither and thither,
And shops shed cheerful light ?
And, arm in arm, while our shadows
Chase us along the panes,
Are we not quite as cosy
As down among country lanes ?

Nobody knows us, heeds us,
Nobody hears or sees,
And the shop-lights gleam more gladly
Than the moon on hedges and trees ;
And people coming and going,
All upon ends of their own,
Though they work a spell on the spirit,
Make it more finely alone.

The sound seems harmless and pleasant
As the murmur of brook and wind ;
The shops with the fruit and the pictures
Have sweetness to suit my mind ;
And nobody knows us, heeds us,
And our loving none reproves,—
I, the poor figure-painter !
You, the lady he loves !

And what if the world should scorn you
For now, and again, as you do,
Assuming a country kirtle,
And bonnet of straw thereto,
Or the robe of a vestal virgin,
Or a nun's gray gabardine,
And keeping a brother and sister
By standing and looking divine ?

And what if the world, moreover,
Should silently pass me by,
Because at the dawn of the struggle,
I labour some stories high !
Why, there's comfort in waiting, working,
And feeling one's heart beat right,—
And rambling alone, love-making,
In London on Saturday night.

For when, with a blush Titianic,
You peep'd in that lodging of mine,
Did I not praise the good angels
For sending a model so fine ?
When I was fill'd with the pureness
You brought to the lonely abode,
Did I not learn to love you ?
And—did Love not lighten the load ?

And haply, indeed, little darling,
While I yearn'd and plotted and plann'd,
And you watch'd me in love and in yearning
Your heart did not quite understand
All the wonder and aspiration
You meant by your loveliness,
All the faith in the frantic endeavour
Your beautiful face could express !

For your love and your beauty have thriven
On things of a low degree,
And you do not comprehend clearly
The drift of a dreamer like me ;
And perchance, when you look'd so divinely,
You meant, and meant only, to say :
"How sad that he dwells in a garret !
And lives on so little a day !"

What of that ? If your sweetness and beauty,
And the love that is part of thee,
Were mirror'd in wilder visions,
And express'd much more to me,
Did the beautiful face, my darling,
Need subtler, loftier lore ?—
Nay, beauty is all our wisdom,—
We painters demand no more.

Indeed, I had been no painter,
And never could hope to rise,
Had I lack'd the power of creating
The meanings for your sweet eyes ;
And what you were really thinking
Scarcely imported, in sooth,—
Since the truth we artists fail for,
Is the truth that *looks* the truth.

Your beautiful face was before me,
Set in its golden hair ;
And the wonder and love and yearning
Were shining sublimely there !
And your eyes said—"Work for glory !
Up, up, where the angels call !"
And I understood, and I labour'd,
And I love the face for it all !

I am talking, you think, so strangely !
And you watch with wondering eyes !—
Could I utter one half of the yearning
Your face, even now, implies !
But the yearning will not be utter'd,
And never, ah ! never can be,
Till the work of the world is over,
And we see as immortals see.

Yet bless thee for ever and ever,
For keeping me humble and true,
And would that my Art could utter
The wisdom I find in you.
Enough to labour and labour,
And to feel one's heart beat right,
And to wander unknown, love-making,
In London on Saturday night !

You think : " How dearly I love him !
How dearly he loves me !
How sweet to live on, and love him,
With children at my knee !
With the useless labour over,
And comfort and leisure won,
And clever people praising
The work that he has done ! "

I think : " How dearly I love her !
How dearly she loves me !
Yet the beauty the heart would utter
Endeth in agony ;
And life is a climbing, a seeking
Of something we never can see !
And death is a slumber, a dreaming
Of something that may not be ! "

And your face is sweetly troubled,
Your little hand stirs on mine own,
For you guess at a hidden meaning,
Since I speak in so tender a tone ;
And you rain the yearning upon me
You brought to my help before,
And I ask no mightier wisdom,—
We painters demand no more.

And we shall live, my darling,
Together till we grow old,
And people will buy my pictures,
And you will gather the gold,
And your loveliness will reward me,
And sanctify all I do,
And toiling for Love's sake, darling,
I may toil for Fame's sake, too.

Ah, dearest, how much you teach me,
How much of hope and of light,
Up yonder, planning and painting,
And here on Saturday night ;
And I turn sad eyes no longer
From the pageant that passes around,
And the vision no more seems weary,
And the head may yet be crown'd !

And I ask no more from mortals
Than your beautiful face implies,—
The beauty the artist beholding
Interprets and sanctifies.
Who says that men have fallen,
That life is wretched and rough ?
I say, the world is lovely,
And that loveliness is enough.

So my doubting days are ended,
And the labour of life seems clear ;
And life hums deeply around me,
Just like the murmur here,
And quickens the sense of living,
And shapes me for peace and storm,—
And dims my eyes with gladness
When it glides into colour and form !

His form and His colour, darling,
Are all we apprehend,
Though the meaning that underlies them
May be utter'd in the end ;
And I seek to go no deeper
Than the beauty and wonder there,
Since the world can look so wondrous,
And your face can look so fair.

For ah ! life's stream is bitter,
When too greedily we drink,
And I might not be so happy
If I knew quite all you think ;
And when God takes much, my darling,
He leaves us the colour and form,—
The scorn of the nations is bitter,
But the touch of a hand is warm.

II.

NELL.

She gazes not at her who hears,
But, while the gathering darkness cries,
Stares at the vacancy through tears,
That burn upon her glistening eyes,
Yet do not flow. Her hair falls free
Around a face grown deathly thin ;
Her elbow rests upon her knee,
And in her palms she props her chin.

SEE, Nan ! his little face looks pinch'd with fright,
His little hands are clench'd together tight !
Born dead, that's comfort ! quiet too ; when one
Thinks of what kill'd him ! Kiss him, Nan, for me.
Thank God, he never look'd upon the sun
That saw his father hang'd on gallows-tree.
O boy, my boy ! you're better dead and sleeping,
Kill'd by poor mother's fear, and shame, and weeping ;
She never loved another living man,
But held to father all through right and wrong—
Ah, yes ! I never turn'd against him, Nan,
I stuck by him that stuck by me so long !

You're a kind woman, Nan ! ay, kind and true !
God will be good to faithful folk like you !
You knew my Ned ?
A better, kinder lad never drew breath—
We loved each other true, though never wed
In church, like some who took him to his death :
A lad as gentle as a lamb, but lost
His senses when he took a drop too much—

Drink did it all—drink made him mad when cross'd—

He was a poor man, and they're hard on such.

O Nan ! that night ! that night !

When I was sitting in this very chair,
Watching and waiting in the candle-light,

And heard his foot come creaking up the stair,
And turn'd, and saw him standing *yonder*, white

And wild, with staring eyes and rumpled hair !
And when I caught his arm and call'd, in fright,
He push'd me, swore, and to the door he pass'd
To lock and bar it fast !

Then down he drops just like a lump of lead,
Holding his brow, shaking, and growing whiter,

And—Nan !—just then the light seem'd growing brighter
And I could see the hands that held his head,
All red ! all bloody red !

What could I do but scream ? He groan'd to hear,
Jump'd to his feet, and gripp'd me by the wrist ;
' Be still, or I shall kill thee, Nell ! ' he hissed.

And I *was* still, for fear.

' They're after me—I've knifed a man ! ' he said.

' Be still !—the drink—drink did it—he is *dead* ! '

And as he said the word, the wind went by
With a whistle and cry—

The room swam round—the babe unborn seem'd to
scream out, and die !

Then we grew still, dead still. I couldn't weep—

All I could do was cling to Ned and hark—

And Ned was cold, cold, cold, as if asleep,
But breathing hard and deep.

The candle flicker'd out—the room grew dark—
And—Nan !—although my heart was true and tried,—

When all grew cold and dim,
I shudder'd—not for fear of them outside,
But just afraid to be alone with *him*.
For winds were wailing—the wild rain cried,—
Folk's footsteps sounded down the court and died—
What could I do but clasp his knees and cling?

And call his name beneath my breath in pain?
Until he threw his head up, listening,
And gave a groan, and hid his face again;
'Ned! Ned!' I whisper'd—and he moan'd and shook—
But did not heed or look!

'Ned! Ned! speak, lad! tell me it is not true!'
At that he raised his head and look'd so wild;
Then, with a stare that froze my blood, he threw
His arms around me, crying like a child,
And held me close—and not a word was spoken—
While I clung tighter to his heart and press'd him—
And did not fear him, though my heart was broken—
But kiss'd his poor stain'd hands, and cried, and
bless'd him!

Then, Nan, the dreadful daylight, coming cold
With sound o' falling rain,—
When I could *see* his face, and it look'd old,
Like the pinch'd face of one that dies in pain!
Well, though we heard folk stirring in the sun,
We never thought to hide away or run,
Until we heard those voices in the street,
That hurrying of feet.
And Ned leap'd up, and knew that they had come.
'Run, Ned!' I cried, but he was deaf and dumb.
'Hide, Ned!' I scream'd, and held him—'hide thee, man!'
He stared with bloodshot eyes, and hearken'd, Nan!
And all the rest is like a dream—the sound

Of knocking at the door—
A rush of men—a struggle on the ground—
A mist—a tramp—a roar ;
For when I got my senses back again,
The room was empty—and my head went round !
The neighbours talk'd and stirr'd about the lane,
And Seven Dials made a moaning sound ;
And as I listen'd, lass, it seem'd to me
Just like the murmur of the great dark Sea,
And Ned a-lying somewhere, stiff and drown'd !

God help him ? God *will* help him ! Ay, no fear !
It was the drink, not Ned—he meant no wrong ;
So kind ! so good !—and I am useless here,
Now he is lost that loved me true and long.
Why, just before the last of it, we parted,
And Ned was calm, though I was broken-hearted ;
And ah, my heart *was* broke ! and ah, I cried
And kiss'd him,—till they took me from his side ;
And though he died *that way* (God bless him !) Ned
Went through it bravely, calm as any there :
They've wrought their fill of spite upon his head,
And—there's the hat and clothes he used to wear !

. . . That night before he died
I didn't cry—my heart was hard and dried ;
But when the clocks went 'one,' I took my shawl
To cover up my face, and stole away,
And walk'd along the silent streets, where all
Look'd cold and still and gray,—
Only the lamps o' London here and there
Scatter'd a dismal gleaming ;
And on I went, and stood in Leicester Square,
Ay, like a woman dreaming :

But just as 'three' was sounded close at hand,
I started and turn'd east, before I knew,—
Then down Saint Martin's Lane, along the Strand,
And through the toll-gate, on to Waterloo.
How I remember all I saw, although
'Twas only like a dream!—
The long still lines o' lights, the chilly gleam
Of moonshine on the deep black stream below;
While far, far, far away, along the sky
Streaks soft as silver ran,
And the pale Moon look'd paler up on high,
And little sounds in far-off streets began!
Well, while I stood, and waited, and look'd down,
And thought how sweet 'twould be to drop and
drown,
Some men and lads went by,
And turning round, I gazed, and watch'd 'em go,
Then felt that they were going to see him die,
And drew my shawl more tight, and follow'd slow.
How clear I feel it still!
The streets grew light, but rain began to fall;
I stopp'd and had some coffee at a stall,
Because I felt so chill;
A cock crew somewhere, and it seem'd a call
To wake the folk who kill!
The man who sold the coffee stared at me!
I must have been a sorry sight to see!
More people pass'd—a country cart with hay
Stopp'd close beside the stall,—and two or three
Talk'd about *it*! I moan'd, and crept away!
Ay, nearer, nearer to the dreadful place,
All in the falling rain,
I went, and kept my shawl upon my face,
And felt no grief or pain—

Only the wet that soak'd me through and through
Seem'd cold and sweet and pleasant to the touch—
It made the streets more drear and silent, too,
And kept away the light I fear'd so much.
Slow, slow the wet streets fill'd, and all seem'd going,
Laughing and chatting, the same way,
And grayer, sadder, lighter, it was growing,
Though still the rain fell fast and darken'd day !
Nan !—every pulse was burning—I could feel
My heart was made o' steel—
As crossing Ludgate Hill, I saw, all blurr'd,
Saint Paul's great clock and heard it slowly chime,
And hadn't power to count the strokes I heard,
But strain'd my eyes and *saw* it wasn't time.
Ah ! then I felt I dared not creep more near,
But went into a lane off Ludgate Hill,
And sitting on a doorstep, I could hear
The people gathering still !
And still the rain was falling, falling,
And deadening the hum I heard from *there* ;
And wet and stiff, I heard the people calling,
And watch'd the rain-drops glistening down my hair,
My elbows on my knees, my fingers dead,—
My shawl thrown off, now none could see,—my head
Dripping and wild and bare.
I heard the crying of a crowd of men,
And next, a hollow sound I knew full well,
For something gripp'd me round the heart !—and then
There came the solemn tolling of a bell !
O God ! O God ! how could I sit close by,
And neither scream nor cry ?
As if I had been stone, all hard and cold,
I listen'd, listen'd, listen'd, still and dumb,
While the folk murmur'd, and the death-bell toll'd,

And the day brighten'd, and his time had come. . . .
 . . . Till—Nan !—all else was silent, but the knell
 Of the slow bell !

And I could only wait, and wait, and wait,

And what I waited for I couldn't tell,—
 At last there came a groaning deep and great—
 Saint Paul's struck 'eight'—

I scream'd, and seem'd to turn to fire, and fell !

God bless him, live or dead !

Oh, he was kind and true—

They've wrought their fill of spite upon his head—

Why didn't they be kind, and take *me* too ?

And there's the dear old things he used to wear,

And here's a lock o' hair !

And Ned ! my Ned !

Is fast asleep, and cannot hear me call ;—

God bless you, Nan, for all you've done and said,

But don't mind *me* ! My heart is broke, that's all !

III.

TIGER BAY:

A STORMY NIGHT'S DREAM.

I.

THE TIGRESS.

A DREAM I had in the dead of night :
 Darkness—the Jungle—a black Man sleeping—
 Head on his arm, with the moon-dew creeping
 Over his face in a silvern light :

The Moon was driving, the Wind was crying ;
Two great lights gleam'd, round, horrid, and red,
Two great eyes, steadfast beside the bed
Where the man was lying.

Hark ! hark !

What wild things cry in the dark ?
Only the Wind as it raves,
Only the Beasts in their caves,
Where the Jungle waves.

The man slept on, and his face was bright,
Tender and strange, for the man was dreaming—
Coldly the light on his limbs was gleaming,
On his jet-black limbs and their folds of white ;—
Leprous-spotted, and gaunt, and hated,
With teeth protruding and hideous head,
Her two eyes burning so still, so red,
The Tigress waited.

Hark ! hark !

The wild things cry in the dark ;
The Wind whistles and raves,
The Beasts groan in their caves,
And the Jungle waves.

From cloud to cloud the cold Moon crept,
The silver light kept coming and going—
The Jungle under was bleakly blowing,
The Tigress watch'd, and the black Man slept.
The Wind was wailing, the Moon was gleaming :
He stirr'd and shiver'd, then raised his head :—
Like a thunderbolt the Tigress sped,
And the Man fell screaming—

Hark ! hark !

The wild things cry in the dark ;

The wild Wind whistles and raves,
The Beasts groan in their caves,
And the Jungle waves.

II.

RATCLIFFE MEG.

Then methought I saw another sight :
Darkness—a Garret—a rushlight dying—
On the broken-down bed a Sailor lying,
Sleeping fast, in the feeble light ;—
The Wind is wailing, the Rain is weeping.
She croucheth there in the chamber dim,
She croucheth there with her eyes on him
As he lieth sleeping—

Hark ! hark !

Who cries outside in the dark ?
Only the Wind on its way,
Only the wild gusts astray,
In Tiger Bay.

Still as a child the Sailor lies :—
She waits—she watches—is she human ?
Is she a Tigress ? is she a Woman ?
Look at the gleam of her deep-set eyes !
Bloated and stain'd in every feature,
With iron jaws, throat knotted and bare,
Eyes deep sunken, jet black hair,
Crouches the creature.

Hark ! hark !

Who cries outside in the dark ?
Only the Wind on its way,
Only the wild gusts astray,
In Tiger Bay.

Hold her ! scream ! or the man is dead ;
A knife in her tight-clench'd hand is gleaming ;
She will *kill* the man as he lieth dreaming !
Her eyes are fixed, her throat swells red.
The Wind is wailing, the Rain is weeping ;
She is crawling closer—O Angels that love him !
She holds her breath and bends above him,
While he stirreth sleeping.

Hark ! hark !
Who cries outside in the dark ?
Only the Wind on its way,
Only the wild gusts astray
In Tiger Bay.

A silken purse doth the sleeper clutch,
And the gold peeps through with a fatal glimmer
She creepeth near—the light grows dimmer—
Her thick throat swells, and she thirsts to touch.
She looks—she pants with a feverish hunger—
She dashes the black hair out of her eyes—
She glares at his face . . . he smiles and sighs—
And the face looks younger.

Hark ! hark !
Who cries outside in the dark ?
Only the wind on its way,
Only the wild gusts astray
In Tiger Bay.

She gazeth on,—he doth not stir—
Her fierce eyes close, her brute lip quivers ;
She longs to strike, but she shrinks and shivers :
The light on his face appalleth her.
The Wind is wailing, the Rain is weeping :
Something holds her—her wild eyes roll ;

His Soul shines out, and she fears his Soul,
Tho' he lieth sleeping.

Hark ! hark !

Who cries outside in the dark ?
Only the Wind on its way,
Only the wild gusts astray
In Tiger Bay.

III.

INTERCESSION.

I saw no more, but I woke,—and prayed :
“ God ! that made the Beast and the Woman !
God of the tigress ! God of the human !
Look to these things whom Thou hast made !
Fierce and bloody and famine-stricken,
Knitted with iron vein and thew—
Strong and bloody, behold the two !—
We see them and sicken.

Mark ! mark !

These outcasts fierce of the dark ;
Where murmur the Wind and the Rain,
Where the Jungle darkens the plain,
And in street and lane.”

God answer'd clear, “ My will be done !
Woman-tigress and tigress-woman—
I made them both, the beast and the human,
But I struck a spark in the brain of the one.
And the spark is a fire, and the fire is a spirit ;
Tho' ye may slay it, it cannot die—
Nay, it shall grow as the days go by,
For My Angels are near it—

Mark ! mark !

Doth it not burn in the dark ?
Spite of the curse and the stain,
Where the Jungle darkens the plain,
And in street and lane."

God said, moreover : "The spark shall grow—

'Tis blest, it gathers, its flame shall lighten,
Bless it and nurse it—let it brighten !

'Tis scatter'd abroad, 'tis a Seed I sow.

And the Seed is a Soul, and the Soul is the Human ;

And it lighteth the face with a sign and a flame.

Not unto beasts have I given the same,
But to man and to woman.

Mark ! mark !

The light shall scatter the dark :

Where murmur the Wind and the Rain,

Where the Jungle darkens the plain,
And in street and lane."

. . . So faint, so dim, so sad to seeing,
Behold it burning ! Only a spark !

So faint as yet, and so dim to mark,
In the tigress-eyes of the human being.

Fan it, feed it, in love and duty,

Track it, watch it in every place,—

Till it burns the bestial frame and face
To its own dim beauty.

Mark ! mark !

A spark that grows in the dark ;

A spark that burns in the brain ;

Spite of the Wind and the Rain,

Spite of the Curse and the Stain

Over the Sea and the Plain

And in street and lane.

NORTH COAST, AND OTHER POEMS.

1867—68.

ROBERT BUCHANAN.

THE BATTLE OF DRUMLIEMOOR.

(COVENANT PERIOD.)

BAR the door! put out the light, for it gleams
 across the night,
And guides the bloody motion of their feet;
Hush the bairn upon thy breast, lest it guide them
 in their quest,
And with water quench the blazing of the peat.
Now, Wife, sit still and hark!—hold my hand amid
 the dark;
O Jeanie, we are scattered—e'en as sleet!

It was down on Drumliemoor, where it slopes upon
 the shore,
And looks upon the breaking of the bay,
In the kirkyard of the dead, where the heather is
 thrice red
With the blood of those asleep beneath the clay;
And the Howiesons were there, and the people of
 Glen Ayr,
And we gathered in the gloom o' night—to pray.

How! Sit at home in fear, when God's Voice was
 in mine ear,
When the priests of Baal were slaughtering His
 sheep?
Nay! there I took my stand, with my reap-hook in
 my hand,
For bloody was the sheaf that I might reap;

And the Lord was in His skies, with a thousand
dreadful eyes,

And His breathing made a trouble on the Deep.

Each mortal of the band brought his weapon in his
hand,

Though the chopper or the spit was all he bare ;
And not a man but knew the work he had to do,
If the Fiend should fall upon us unaware.

And our looks were ghastly white, but it was not
with affright,—

The Lord our God was present to our prayer.

Oh, solemn, sad, and slow, rose the stern voice of
Monroe,

And he curst the curse of Babylon the Whore ;
We could not see his face, but a gleam was in its
place,

Like the phosphor of the foam upon the shore ;
And the eyes of all were dim, as they fixed them-
selves on him,

And the Sea filled up the pauses with its roar.

But when, with accents calm, Kilmahoe gave out the
psalm,

The sweetness of God's Voice upon his tongue,
With one voice we praised the Lord of the Fire and
of the Sword,

And louder than the winter wind it rung ;
And across the stars on high went the smoke of
tempest by,

And a vapour roll'd around us as we sung.

Tw'as terrible to hear our cry rise deep and clear,
Though we could not see the criers of the cry,

But we sang and gript our brands, and touched
each other's hands,

While a thin sleet smote our faces from the sky ;
And, sudden, strange, and low, hissed the voice of
Kilmahoe,

'Grip your weapons! Wait in silence! They
are nigh!'

And heark'ning, with clench'd teeth, we could hear
across the heath,

The tramping of the horses as they flew,
And no man breathed a breath, but all were still as death,
And close together shivering we drew ;
And deeper round us fell all the eyeless gloom of Hell,
And—the Fiend was in among us ere we knew !

Then our battle-shriek arose, mid the cursing of our foes—
No face of friend or foeman could we mark ;
But I struck and kept my stand (trusting God to guide
my hand),

And struck, and struck, and heard the hell-hounds bark ;
And I fell beneath a horse, but I reached with all my
force,

And ript him with my reap-hook through the dark.

As we struggled, knowing not whose hand was at
our throat,

Whose blood was spouting warm into our eyes,
We felt the thick snow-drift swoop upon us from
the lift,

And murmur in the pauses of our cries ;
But, lo ! before we wist, rose the curtain of the
mist,

And the pale Moon shed a glimmer from the skies.

O God ! it was a sight that made the hair turn
white,

That wither'd up the heart's blood into woe,
To see the faces loom in the dimly lighted gloom,
And the butcher'd lying bloodily below ;
While melting, with no sound, fell so peacefully
around

The whiteness and the wonder of the Snow !

Ay, and thicker, thicker, poured the pale Silence of
the Lord,

From the hollow of His hand we saw it shed,
And it gather'd round us there, till we groan'd and
gasp'd for air,

And beneath was ankle-deep and stained red ;
And soon, whatever wight was smitten down in fight
Was *buried* in the drift ere he was dead !

Then we beheld at length the troopers in their
strength,

For faster, faster, faster up they streamed,
And their pistols flashing bright showed their faces
ashen white,

And their blue steel caught the driving Moon, and
gleamed.

But a dying voice cried, ' Fly ! ' And behold, e'en
at the cry,

A panic fell upon us, and we screamed !

Oh, shrill and awful rose, 'mid the splashing blood
and blows,

Our scream unto the Lord that let us die ;
And the Fiend amid us roared his defiance at the Lord,
And his servants slew the strong man 'mid his cry ;

And the Lord kept still in Heaven, and the only
answer given

Was the white Snow falling, falling, from the sky.

Then we fled ! the darkness grew ! 'mid the driving
cold we flew,

Each alone, yea, each for those whom he held dear ;
And I heard upon the wind the thud of hoofs behind,
And the scream of those who perish'd in their fear,
But I knew by heart each path through the dark-
ness of the strath,

And I hid myself all day,—and I am here.

Ah ! gathered in one fold be the holy men and bold,

And beside them the accursed and the proud ;

The Howiesons are there, and the Wylies of Glen Ayr,
Kirkpatrick, and Macdonald, and Macleod.

And while the widow groans, lo ! God's Hand around
their bones

His thin ice windeth whitely, as a shroud.

On mountain and in vale our women will look pale,

And palest where the ocean surges boom :

Buried 'neath snow-drift white, with no holy prayer or rite,

Lie the loved ones they look for in the gloom ;

And deeper, deeper still, spreads the Snow on vale and hill,

And deeper and yet deeper is their Tomb !

THE BOOK OF ORM.

1870.

ROBERT BUCHANAN.

I.

THE DREAM OF THE WORLD WITHOUT DEATH.

(II. FROM BOOK III., SONGS OF CORRUPTION.)

NOW, sitting by her side, worn out with weeping,
Behold, I fell to sleep, and had a vision,
Wherein I heard a wondrous Voice intoning :

Crying aloud, "The Master on His throne
Openeth now the seventh seal of wonder,
And beckoneth back the angel men name Death."

And at His feet the mighty Angel kneeleth,
Breathing not ; and the Lord doth look upon him,
Saying, "Thy wanderings on earth are ended."

And lo ! the mighty Shadow sitteth idle
Even at the silver gates of heaven,
Drowsily looking in on quiet waters,
And puts his silence among men no longer.

* * * * *

The world was very quiet. Men in traffic
Cast looks over their shoulders ; pallid seamen
Shivered to walk upon the decks alone ;

And women barred their doors with bars of iron,
In the silence of the night ; and at the sunrise
Trembled behind the husbandmen afield.

I could not see a kirkyard near or far ;
I thirsted for a green grave, and my vision
Was weary for the white gleam of a tombstone.

But hearkening dumbly, ever and anon
I heard a cry out of a human dwelling,
And felt the cold wind of a lost one's going.

One struck a brother fiercely, and he fell,
And faded in a darkness ; and that other
Tore his hair, and was afraid, and could not perish.

One struck his aged mother on the mouth,
And she vanished with a grey grief from his hearthstone.
One melted from her bairn, and on the ground

With sweet unconscious eyes the bairn lay smiling.
And many made a weeping among mountains,
And hid themselves in caverns, and were drunken.

I heard a voice from out the beauteous earth,
Whose side rolled up from winter into summer,
Crying, " I am grievous for my children."

I heard a voice from out the hoary ocean,
Crying, " Burial in the breast of me were better,
Yea, burial in the salt flags and green crystals."

I heard a voice from out the hollow ether,
Saying, " The thing ye cursed hath been abolished—
Corruption, and decay, and dissolution !"

And the world shrieked, and the summer-time was bitter,
And men and women feared the air behind them ;
And for lack of its green graves the world was hateful.

* * * * *

Now at the bottom of a snowy mountain
I came upon a woman thin with sorrow,
Whose voice was like the crying of a sea-gull.

Saying, "O Angel of the Lord, come hither,
And bring me him I seek for on thy bosom,
That I may close his eyelids and embrace him.

"I curse thee that I cannot look upon him!
I curse thee that I know not he is sleeping!
Yet know that he has vanished upon God!

"I laid my little girl upon a wood-bier,
And very sweet she seemed, and near unto me;
And slipping flowers into her shroud was comfort.

"I put my silver mother in the darkness,
And kissed her, and was solaced by her kisses,
And set a stone, to mark the place, above her.

"And green, green were their quiet sleeping-places,
So green that it was pleasant to remember
That I and my tall man would sleep beside them.

"The closing of dead eyelids is not dreadful,
For comfort comes upon us when we close them,
And tears fall, and our sorrow grows familiar;

"And we can sit above them where they slumber,
And spin a dreamy pain into a sweetness,
And know indeed that we are very near them.

"But to reach out empty arms is surely dreadful,
And to feel the hollow empty world is awful,
And bitter grow the silence and the distance.

"There is no space for grieving or for weeping;
No touch, no cold, no agony to strive with,
And nothing but a horror and a blankness!"

* * * * *

Now behold I saw a woman in a mud-hut
Raking the white spent embers with her fingers,
And fouling her bright hair with the white ashes.

Her mouth was very bitter with the ashes ;
Her eyes with dust were blinded ; and her sorrow
Sobbed in the throat of her like gurgling water.

And all around the voiceless hills were hoary,
But red light scorched their edges ; and above her
There was a soundless trouble of the vapours.

" Whither, and O whither," said the woman,
" O Spirit of the Lord, hast Thou conveyed them,
My little ones, my little son and daughter ?

" For, lo ! we wandered forth at early morning,
And winds were blowing round us, and their mouths
Blew rose-buds to the rose-buds, and their eyes

" Looked violets at the violets, and their hair
Made sunshine in the sunshine, and their passing
Left a pleasure in the dewy leaves behind them ;

" And suddenly my little son looked upward,
And his eyes were dried like dew-drops ; and his going
Was like a blow of fire upon my face.

" And my little son was gone. My little daughter
Looked round me for him, clinging to my vesture ;
Eut the Lord had drawn him from me, and I knew it

" By the sign He gives the stricken, that the lost one
Lingers nowhere on the earth, on hill or valley,
Neither underneath the grasses nor the tree-roots.

" And my shriek was like the splitting of an ice-reef,
And I sank among my hair, and all my palm
Was moist and warm where the little hand had filled it.

" Then I fled and sought him wildly, hither and thither—
Though I knew that he was stricken from me wholly
By the token that the Spirit gives the stricken.

"I sought him in the sunlight and the starlight,
I sought him in great forests, and in waters
Where I saw mine own pale image looking at me.

"And I forgot my little bright-haired daughter,
Though her voice was like a wild-bird's far behind me,
Till the voice ceased, and the universe was silent.

"And stilly, in the starlight, came I backward
To the forest where I missed him ; and no voices
Brake the stillness as I stooped down in the starlight,

"And saw two little shoes filled up with dew,
And no mark of little footsteps any farther,
And knew my little daughter had gone also."

* * * * *

But beasts died ; yea, the cattle in the yoke,
The milk-cow in the meadow, and the sheep,
And the dog upon the doorstep : and men envied.

And birds died ; yea, the eagle at the sun-gate,
The swan upon the waters, and the farm-fowl,
And the swallows on the housetops : and men envied.

And reptiles ; yea, the toad upon the road-side,
The slimy, speckled snake among the grass,
The lizard on the ruin : and men envied.

The dog in lonely places cried not over
The body of his master ; but it missed him,
And whined into the air, and died, and rotted.

The traveller's horse lay swollen in the pathway,
And the blue fly fed upon it : but no traveller
Was there ; nay, not his footprint on the ground.

The cat mewed in the midnight, and the blind
Gave a rustle, and the lamp burnt blue and faint,
And the father's bed was empty in the morning.

The mother fell to sleep beside the cradle,
Rocking it, while she slumbered, with her foot,
And wakened,—and the cradle there was empty

I saw a two-years' child, and he was playing;
And he found a dead white bird upon the doorway,
And laughed, and ran to show it to his mother.

The mother moaned, and clutched him, and was bitter,
And flung the dead white bird across the threshold;
And another white bird flitted round and round it,

And uttered a sharp cry, and twittered and twittered
And lit beside its dead mate, and grew busy,
Strewing it over with green leaves and yellow.

* * * * *

So far, so far to seek for were the limits
Of affliction; and men's terror grew a homeless
Terror, yea, and a fatal sense of blankness.

There was no little token of distraction,
There was no visible presence of bereavement,
Such as the mourner easeth out his heart on.

There was no comfort in the slow farewell,
Nor gentle shutting of beloved eyes,
Nor beautiful broodings over sleeping features.

There were no kisses on familiar faces,
No weaving of white grave-clothes, no last pondering
Over the still wax cheeks and folded fingers.

There was no putting tokens under pillows,
There was no dreadful beauty slowly fading,
Fading like moonlight softly into darkness.

There were no churchyard paths to walk on, thinking
How near the well-beloved ones are lying.
There were no sweet green graves to sit and muse on,

Till grief should grow a summer meditation,
The shadow of the passing of an angel,
And sleeping should seem easy, and not cruel.

Nothing but wondrous parting and a blankness.

* * * * *

But I awoke, and, lo! the burthen was uplifted,
And I prayed within the chamber where she slumbered,
And my tears flowed fast and free, but were not bitter.

I eased my heart three days by watching near her,
And made her pillow sweet with scent and flowers,
And could bear at last to put her in the darkness.

And I heard the kirk-bells ringing very slowly,
And the priests were in their vestments, and the earth
Dripped awful on the hard wood, yet I bore it.

And I cried, "O unseen Sender of Corruption,
I bless Thee for the wonder of Thy mercy,
Which softeneth the mystery and the parting.

"I bless Thee for the change and for the comfort,
The bloomless face, shut eyes, and waxen fingers,—
For Sleeping, and for Silence, and Corruption."

II.

ROSES.

(IX. FROM BOOK VII., THE DEVIL'S MYSTICS.)

"SAD, and sweet, and wise,
Here a child reposes,
Dust is on his eyes,
Quietly he lies,—
Satan, strew Roses !"

Weeping low, creeping slow,
Came the Weary-winged !
Roses red over the dead
Quietly he flingèd.

"I am old," he thought,
"And the world's day closes ;
Pale and fever-fraught,
Sadly have I brought
These blood-red Roses."

By his side the mother came
Shudderingly creeping ;
The Devil's and the woman's heart
Bitterly were weeping.

"Swift he came and swift he flew,
Hopeless he reposes ;
Waiting on is weary too,—
Wherefore on his grave we strew
Bitter, withering Roses."

The Devil gripped the woman's heart,
With gall he staunched its bleeding ;
Far away, beyond the day,
The Lord heard interceding.

“ Lord God, One in Three !
Sure Thy anger closes ;
Yesterday I died, and see
The Weary-winged over me
Bitterly streweth Roses.”

The voice cried out, “ Rejoice ! rejoice
There shall be sleep for evil ! ”
And all the sweetness of God's voice
Passed strangely through the Devil.

MISCELLANEOUS POEMS AND BALLADS.

1878—83.

I.

THE LIGHTS OF LEITH.

I.

“THE lights o’ Leith ! the lights o’ Leith !”
The skipper cried aloud—
While the wintry gale with snow and hail
Blew snell thro’ sail and shroud.

“The lights o’ Leith ! the lights o’ Leith !”
As he paced the deck cried he—
“How merrily bright they burn this night
Thro’ the reek o’ the stormy sea !”

As the ship ran in thro’ the surging spray
Afire seemed all the town ;
They saw the glare from far away,
And, safely steer’d to the land-lock’d bay,
They cast their anchor down.

“’Tis sure a feast in the town o’ Leith”
(To his mate the skipper spoke),
“And yonder shadows that come and go,
Across the quay where the bonfires glow,
Are the merry-making folk.

“In right good time we are home once more
From the wild seas and rough weather—
Come, launch a boat, and we’ll run ashore,
And see the sport together.”

But the mate replied, while he shoreward gazed
With sad and gentle eyes,
While the lights of Leith beyond him blazed
And he heard the landward cries :

“ ’Tis twenty lang year since I first left here,
In the time o’ frost and snaw—
I was only a lad, and my heart was mad
To be up, and free, and awa’ !

“ My mither she prayed me no’ to gang,
For she had nae bairn but me—
My father was droon’d, and sleeping amang
The weeds o’ the northern sea.

“ I stole awa’ in the mirk o’ night
And left my mither asleep,
And ere she waken’d, at morning light,
I was oot on the roaring deep.

“ Aye, twenty lang year hae past sin’ syne,
And my heart has aft been sair
To think o’ that puir auld mither o’ mine,
Alane, in a world o’ care.

“ When back I cam’ frae the salt sea faem
I was a bearded man,
Ae simmer I dwelt in the hoose at hame,
Then awa’ to the sea I ran.

“ And twice sin’ syne hae I left the sea
To seek the hameward track,
And aye my mither had had for me—
Tho’ ne’er a gift had my hands to gie—
A tender welcome back.

"Then, cast awa' in a soothern land,
And taen to slaverie,
I lang'd for the touch o' a mither's hand,
And the glint o' a mither's e'e.

"But noo that my wandering days are done,
I hae dree'd a penance sad,
I am coming hame, like the Prodigal Son,
But wi' siller to mak' her glad !

"I hae gowden rings for my mither's hand,
Bonnie and braw past dream,
And, fit for a leddy o' the land,
A shawl o' the Indian seam.

"And I lang, and lang, to seek ance mair
The cot by the side o' the sea,
And to find my gray old mither there,
Waiting and watching for me ;

"To dress her oot like a leddy grand,
While the tears o' gladness drap,
To put the rings on her wrinkled hand,
The siller intil her lap !

"And to say ' O mither, I'm hame, I'm hame !
Forgie me, O forgie !
And never mair shall ye ken a care
Until the day you dee.' "

O bright and red shone the lights of Leith
In the snowy winter-tide—
Down the cheeks of the man the salt tears ran,
As he stood by the skipper's side.

"But noo I look on the lights o' hame
My heart sinks sick and cauld—
Lest I come owre late for her love or blame,
For oh ! my mither was auld !

"For her een were dim when I sail'd awa',
And snaw was on her heid,
And I fear—I fear—after mony a year,
To find my mither—deid !

"Sae I daurna enter the toon o' Leith,
Where the merry yule-fires flame,
Lest I hear the tidings o' dule and death,
Ere I enter the door o' hame.

"But ye'll let them row me to yonner shore
Beyond the lights o' the quay,
And I'll climb the brae to the cottage door,
A hunnerd yards frae the sea.

"If I see a light thro' the mirk o' night,
I'll ken my mither is there ;
I'll keek, maybe, through the pane, and see
Her face in its snawy hair !

"The face sae dear that for mony a year
I hae prayed to see again,—
O a mither's face has a holy grace
'Bune a' the faces o' men !

"Then I'll enter in wi' silent feet,
And saftly cry her name—
And I'll see the dim auld een grow sweet
Wi' a heavenly welcome hame !

“And I'll cry, ‘O mither, I'm here, I'm here !
 Forgie me, O forgie !
And never mair shall ye ken a care !
Your son shall lea' thee never mair
 To sail on the stormy sea ! ’ ”

II.

They row'd him to the lonely shore
 Beyond the lights of the quay,
And he climb'd the brae to the cottage door
 A hundred yards from the sea.

He saw no light thro' the mirk of night,
 And his heart sank down with dread,
“But 'tis late,” thought he, “and she lies, maybe,
 Soond sleeping in her bed ! ”

Half-way he paused, for the blast blew keen,
 And the sea roar'd loud below,
And he turn'd his face to the town-lights, seen
 Thro' the white and whirling snow.

The lights of Leith ! the lights of Leith !
 How they flash'd on the night-black bay,
While with sullen roar on the rocky shore
 The waters splash'd their spray !

When close he came to the lonely cot,
 He paused in deeper dread,—
For the gleam that came from the far-off flame
 Just touch'd the walls with red ;

Thro' the doorway dark did the bleak wind blow,
 The windows were black and bare,
And the house was floor'd with the cruel snow,
 And roof'd with the empty air !

"O mither, mither!" he moan'd aloud,
 "And are ye deid and gane?
Hae I waited in tears thro' the weary years,
 And a' in vain, in vain?"

He stood on the hearth, while the snow swam drear
 Between the roofless walls—

"O mither! mither! come here, come here,—
 'Tis your ain son, Robin, calls!"

On his eager ears, as he stood in tears,
 There came a faint foot-tread—
Then out of the storm crept a woman's form
 With hooded face and head.

Like a black, black ghost the shape came near
 Till he heard its heavy breath—

"What man," it sighed, "stands sabbing here,
 In the wearifu' hoose o' death?"

"Come hither, come hither, whae'er ye be,"
 He answer'd loud and clear—

'I am Robin Sampson, come hame frae the sea,
 And I seek my mither dear!"

"O Robin, Robin," a voice cried sobbing,
 "O Robin, and is it yersel'?"

I'm Janet Wylie, lame Janet Wylie,
 Your kissen, frae Marywell!"

"O Robin, Robin," again she cried,
 "O Robin, and can it be?"

Ab, better far had the wind and the tide
 Ne'er brought ye across the sea!"

Wailing she sank on the snow-heap'd hearth,
And rocked her body in pain—

“O Robin, Robin,” she cried to him sobbing,
“Your mither—your mither—is gane!”

The lights of Leith! the lights of Leith!
How brightly still they glow!

The faint flame falls on the ruined walls,
On the hearthstone heap'd in snow!

“O Janet, Janet, kind cousin Janet,
If ever ye cared for me,

Noo let me hear o' my mither dear,
And hoo she cam' to dee!”

Wailing she lifted her weeping face,
And answer'd in soul's despair—

“O Robin, awa' frae the wicked place—
Awa'—and ask nae mair!”

But he grasp'd her arm with a grip of steel
And cried “O Janet, speak!”

“O Robin dear, dinna seek to hear,
For oh! your heart must breik!”

But he pressed her more, and he pleaded sore,
Till at last the tale was told,

And he listened on, till the tale was done,
Like a man death-struck and cold.

III.

“O Robin dear, when ye sail'd awa',
That last time, on the sea,

We knew her heart was breiking in twa,
And we thought that she wad dee.

“ But after a while she forced a smile—
 ‘ I’ll greet nae mair,’ said she,
“ But I’ll wait and pray that the Lord, ae day,
 May bring him again to me !

“ ‘ The Lord is guid, and Robin my son
 As kind as a bairn can be—
Aye, true as steel, and he loes me weel,
 Tho’ he’s gane across the sea.’

“ O Robin, Robin, baith late and air’
 She prayed and prayed for thee,
But evermair when the blast blew sair,
 She was langest on her knee ! ”

The lights of Leith ! the lights of Leith !
 That flame o’er sea and skies !
How bright they glow !—while the salt tears flow
 From that bearded mariner’s eyes.

“ But, Robin, your mither was auld and pair,
 And the seasons cauld and keen ;
The white, white snaw was on her hair,
 The frost film ower her een.

“ And here in the hut beside the sea,
 The pair auld wife did dwell—
Her only kin were my mither and me,
 And we were as pair’s hersel’.

“ She leaved on a handfu’ o’ barley meal,
 A drink frae the spring sae cauld—
O Robin, Robin, a heart o’ steel
 Might bleed for the weak and auld !

"In twa she was bent, on a staff she leant,
Wi' ragged duds for claise,
And wearifu' up and doon she went,
Gath'ring her sticks and straes.

"And the weans wad thrang as she creepit alang,
And point, and cry sae shrill—
'There's Grannie Sampson,' was ever their sang,
'The wicked witch o' the hill!'

"Ah, mony's the time up the hill she'd climb,
While the imps wad scream and crawl—
At the door she'd stand, wi' her staff in hand,
And angrily screech them awa'!

"Then wi' feeble feet creeping ben, she'd greet
That the warld misca'd her sae,
And wi' face as white as the winding-sheet,
She'd kneel by the bed, and pray.

"O Robin, Robin, she prayed for him
Wha sail'd in the wild sea-rack,
And the tears wad drap frae her een sae dim,
As she prayed for her bairn to come back!

"Then whiles . . . when she thought nae folk were near . . .
(O Robin, she thought nae harm!
But stoop your heid, lest they hear, lest they hear!)
She tried . . . an auld-farrant *charm*.

"A charm aft tried in the ingleside
When bairns are blythesome and free,
A charm (come near, lest they hear, lest they hear!)
To bring her boy hame from the sea!

“ And the auld black cat at her elbow sat,
 (The cat you gied her yersel’)
And the folk, keeking in thro’ the pane, saw a sin,
 And thought she was weaving a spell ! ”

The lights of Leith ! the lights of Leith !
 · They flame on the wintry gale !
With sore drawn breath, and a face like death,
 He hears to the gruesome tale !

“ O Robin, Robin, I kenna hoo
 The lee was faither’d first,
But (whisper again, lest they ken, lest they ken !)
 They thought the puir body accurst !

“ They thought the spell had been wrought in Hell,
 To kill and curse and blight,
They thought she flew, when naebody knew,
 To a Sabbath o’ fiends, ilk night !

“ Then ane whose corn had wither’d ae morn,
 And ane whose kye sicken’d doon,
Crept, scared and pale, wi’ the leein’ tale,
 To the meenisters, up the toon.

“ Noo, Robin, jest then, King Jamie the King
 Was oot at sea in his bark,
And the bark nigh sank unner, wi’ fire-slaught and thunn
 And they thought—the Deil was at wark !

“ The King cam’ to land, and loup’d on the strand,
 Pale as a ghaist and afraid,
Wi’ courtiers and clergy, a wild fearfu’ band,
 He ran to the kirk, and prayed.

"Then the clergy made oot 'twas witchcraft, nae doot,
And searchit up and doon,
And . . . foond your auld mither (wae's me !) and twa ither,
And dragg'd them up to the toon !

"O Robin, dear Robin, hearken nae mair !"

"Speak on, I'll heark to the en' !"

"O Robin, Robin, the sea oot there
Is kinder than cruel men !

"They took her before King Jamie the King,
Whaur he sat wi' sceptre and croon,
And the cooard courtiers stood in a ring,
And the meenisters gather'd roon'.

"They bade her tell she had wrought the spell
That made the tempest blaw ;
They strippit her bare as a naked bairn,
They tried her wi' pincers and heated airn,
Till she shriek'd and swoon'd awa' !

"O Robin, Robin, the King sat there,
While the cruel deed was done,
And the clergy o' Christ ne'er bade him spare
For the sake o' God's ain Son ! . . . "

The lights of Leith ! the lights of Leith !
Like Hell's own lights they glow
While the sailor stands, with his trembling hands
Prest hard on his heart in woe !

"O Robin, Robin . . . they doom'd her to burn . . .
Doon yonner upon the quay . . .
This night was the night . . . see the light ! see the light !
How it burns by the side o' the sea !"

... She paused with a moan. . . . He had left her alone,
And rushing through drift and snow,
Down the side of the wintry hill he had flown,
His eyes on the lights below !

IV.

The lights of Leith ! the lights of Leith !
They flame on the eyes of the crowd,
Around, up and down, move the folk of the town,
While the bells of the kirk peal aloud !
High up on the quay, blaze the balefires, and see !
Three stakes are deep set in the ground,
To each stake smear'd with pitch clings the corpse of a wite
With the fire flaming redly around !
What madman is he who leaps in where they gleam,
Close, close, to the centremost form ?
"O mither, O mither !" he cries, with a scream,
That rings thro' the heart of the storm !
He can see the white hair snowing down thro' the glare,
The white face upraised to the skies—
Then the cruel red blaze blots the thing from his gaze
And he falls on his face,—and dies.

V.

The lights of Leith ! the lights of Leith !
See, see ! they are flaming still !
Thro' the clouds of the past their flame is cast,
While the Sabbath bells ring shrill !
The lights of Leith ! the lights of Leith !
They'll burn till the Judgment Day !
Till the Church's curse and the monarch's shame,
And the sin that slew in the Blessed Name,
Are burned and purg'd away !

II.

THE WEDDING OF SHON MACLEAN.

A BAGPIPE MELODY.

TO the wedding of Shon Maclean,
Twenty Pipers together
Came in the wind and the rain
Playing across the heather ;
Backward their ribbons flew,
Blast upon blast they blew,
Each clad in tartan new,
Bonnet, and blackcock feather :
And every Piper was fou,
Twenty Pipers together !—

He's but a Sassenach blind and vain
Who never heard of Shon Maclean—
The Duke's own Piper, called "Shon the Fair,"
From his freckled skin and his fiery hair.
Father and son, since the world's creation,
The Macleans had followed this occupation,
And played the pibroch to fire the Clan
Since the first Duke came and the earth began.
Like the whistling of birds, like the humming of bees,
Like the sough of the south-wind in the trees,
Like the singing of angels, the playing of shawms,
Like Ocean itself with its storms and its calms,
Were the strains of Shon, when with cheeks aflame
He blew a blast thro' the pipes of fame.

At last, in the prime of his playing life,
The spirit moved him to take a wife—
A lassie with eyes of Highland blue,
Who loved the pipes and the Piper too,
And danced to the sound with a foot and a leg
White as a lily and smooth as an egg.
So, twenty Pipers were coming together
O'er the moor and across the heather,

All in the wind and the rain :
Twenty Pipers so brawly dressed
Were flocking in from the east and west,
To bless the bedding and blow their best
At the wedding of Shon Maclean.

At the wedding of Shon Maclean
'Twas wet and windy weather !
Yet thro' the wind and the rain
Came twenty Pipers together !
Earach and Dougal Dhu,
Sandy of Isla too,
Each with the bonnet o' blue,
Tartan, and blackcock feather :
And every Piper was fou,
Twenty Pipers together !

The knot was tied, the blessing said,
Shon was married, the feast was spread.
At the head of the table sat, huge and hoar,
Strong Sandy of Isla, age fourscore,
Whisker'd, grey as a Haskeir seal,
And clad in crimson from head to heel.
Beneath and round him in their degree
Gathered the men of minstrelsie,
With keepers, gillies, and lads and lasses,
Mingling voices, and jingling glasses.

At soup and haggis, at roast and boil'd,
 Awhile the happy gathering toil'd,—
 While Shon and Jean at the table ends
 Shook hands with a hundred of their friends.—
 Then came a hush. Thro' the open door
 A wee bright form flash'd on the floor,—
 The Duke himself, in the kilt and plaid,
 With slim soft knees, like the knees of a maid.
 And he took a glass, and he cried out plain—
 "I drink to the health of Shon Maclean !
 To Shon the Piper and Jean his wife,
 A clean fireside and a merry life !"
 Then out he slipt, and each man sprang
 To his feet, and with "hooch" the chamber rang
 "Clear the tables !" shriek'd out one—
 A leap, a scramble,—and it was done !
 And then the Pipers all in a row
 Tuned their pipes and began to blow,
 While all to dance stood fain :
 Sandy of Isla and Earach More,
 Dougal Dhu from Kilflannan shore,
 Played up the company on the floor
 At the wedding of Shon Maclean.

At the wedding of Shon Maclean,
 Twenty Pipers together
 Stood up, while all their train
 Ceased to clatter and blether.
 Full of the mountain-dew,
 First in their pipes they blew,
 Mighty of bone and thew,
 Red-cheek'd, with lungs of leather :
 And every Piper was fou,
 Twenty Pipers together !

Who led the dance ? In pomp and pride
The Duke himself led out the Bride !
Great was the joy of each beholder,
For the wee Duke only reach'd her shoulder ;
And they danced, and turned, when the reel began,
Like a giantess and a fairie man !
But like an earthquake was the din
When Shon himself led the Duchess in !
And she took her place before him there,
Like a white mouse dancing with a bear !
So trim and tiny, so slim and sweet,
Her blue eyes watching Shon's great feet,
With a smile that could not be resisted,
She jigged, and jumped, and twirl'd, and twisted !
Sandy of Isla led off the reel,
The Duke began it with toe and heel,
Then all join'd in amain ;
Twenty Pipers ranged in a row,
From squinting Shamus to lame Kilcroe,
Their cheeks like crimson, began to blow,
At the wedding of Shon Maclean.

At the wedding of Shon Maclean
They blew with lungs of leather
And blithesome was the strain
Those Pipers played together !
Moist with the mountain-dew,
Mighty of bone and thew,
Each with the bonnet o' blue,
Tartan, and blackcock feather :
And every Piper was fou,
Twenty Pipers together !

Oh for a wizard's tongue to tell
Of all the wonders that befell !

Of how the Duke, when the first stave died,
Reached up on tiptoe to kiss the Bride,
While Sandy's pipes, as their mouths were meeting,
Skirl'd, and set every heart a-beating !
Then Shon took the pipes ! and all was still,
As silently he the bags did fill,
With flaming cheeks and round bright eyes,
Till the first faint music began to rise.
Like a thousand laverocks singing in tune,
Like countless corn-craiks under the moon,
Like the smack of kisses, like sweet bells ringing,
Like a mermaid's harp, or a kelpie singing,
Blew the pipes of Shon ; and the witching strain
Was the gathering song of the Clan Maclean !
Then slowly, softly, at his side,
All the Pipers around replied,
And swelled the solemn strain :
The hearts of all were proud and light,
To hear the music, to see the sight,
And the Duke's own eyes were dim that night,
At the wedding of Shon Maclean.

So to honour the Clan Maclean
Straight they began to gather,
Blowing the wild refrain,
" Blue bonnets across the heather !"
They stamp'd, they strutted, they blew ;
They shriek'd ; like cocks they crew ;
Blowing the notes out true,
With wonderful lungs of leather :
And every Piper was fou,
Twenty Pipers together !

When the Duke and Duchess went away
The dance grew mad and the guests grew gay ;

Man and maiden, face to face,
Leapt and footed and scream'd apace !
Round and round the dancers whirl'd,
Shriller, louder, the Pipers skirl'd,
Till the soul seem'd swooning into sound,
And all creation was whirling round !
Then, in a pause of the dance and glee,
The Pipers, ceasing their minstrelsie,
Draining the glass in groups did stand,
And passed the sneesh-box from hand to hand
Sandy of Isla, with locks of snow,
Squinting Shamus, blind Kilmahoe,
Finlay Beg, and Earach More,
Dougal Dhu of Kilflannan shore,—
All the Pipers, black, yellow, and green,
All the colours that ever were seen,
All the Pipers of all the Macs,
Gather'd together and took their cracks.
Then (no man knows how the thing befell
For none was sober enough to tell)
These heavenly Pipers from twenty places
Began disputing with crimson faces ;
Each asserting, like one demented,
The claims of the Clan he represented.
In vain grey Sandy of Isla strove
To soothe their struggle with words of love,
Asserting there, like a gentleman,
The superior claims of his own great Clan ;
Then, finding to reason is despair,
He seizes his pipes and he plays an air—
The gathering tune of his Clan—and tries
To drown in music the shrieks and cries !
Heavens ! Every Piper, grown mad with ire,
Seizes *his* pipes with a fierce desire,

And blowing madly, with skirl and squeak,
 Begins *his* particular tune to shriek !
 Up and down the gamut they go,
 Twenty Pipers, all in a row,
 Each with a different strain !
 Each tries hard to drown the first,
 Each blows louder till like to burst.
 Thus were the tunes of the Clans rehearst
 At the wedding of Shon Maclean !

At the wedding of Shon Maclean,
 Twenty Pipers together,
 Blowing with might and main,
 Thro' wonderful lungs of leather !
 Wild was the hullabaloo !
 They stamp'd, they scream'd, they crew !
 Twenty strong blasts they blew,
 Holding the heart in tether :
 And every Piper was fou,
 Twenty Pipers together !

A storm of music ! Like wild sleuth-hounds
 Contending together, were the sounds !
 At last a bevy of Eve's bright daughters
 Pour'd oil—that's whisky—upon the waters ;
 And after another dram went down,
 The Pipers chuckled and ceased to frown,
 Embraced like brothers and kindred spirits,
 And fully admitted each other's merits.

All bliss must end ! For now the Bride
 Was looking weary and heavy-eyed,
 And soon she stole from the drinking chorus,
 While the company settled to *deoch-an-dorus*

One hour—another—took its flight—
The clock struck twelve—the dead of night—
And still the Bride like a rose so red
Lay lonely up in the bridal bed.
At half-past two the Bridegroom, Shon,
Dropt on the table as heavy as stone,
But four strong Pipers across the floor
Carried him up to the bridal door,
Push'd him in at the open portal,
And left him snoring, serene and mortal !
The small stars twinkled over the heather,
As the Pipers wandered away together,
But one by one on the journey dropt,
Clutching his pipes, and there he stopt !
One by one on the dark hillside
Each faint blast of the bagpipes died,
Amid the wind and the rain !
And the twenty Pipers at break of day
In twenty different bogholes lay,
Serenely sleeping upon their way
From the wedding of Shon Maclean !

III.

THE BALLAD OF JUDAS ISCARIOT.

'TWAS the body of Judas Iscariot
Lay in the Field of Blood ;
'Twas the soul of Judas Iscariot
Beside the body stood.

Black was the earth by night,
And black was the sky ;
Black, black were the broken clouds,
Tho' the red Moon went by.

'Twas the body of Judas Iscariot
Strangled and dead lay there ;
'Twas the soul of Judas Iscariot
Look'd on it in despair.

The breath of the World came and went
Like a sick man's in rest ;
Drop by drop on the World's eyes
The dews fell cool and blest.

Then the soul of Judas Iscariot
Did make a gentle moan—
'I will bury underneath the ground
My flesh and blood and bone.

'I will bury deep beneath the soil,
Lest mortals look thereon,
And when the wolf and raven come
The body will be gone !

'The stones of the field are sharp as steel,
And hard and cold, God wot ;
And I must bear my body hence
Until I find a spot !'

'Twas the soul of Judas Iscariot,
So grim, and gaunt, and gray,
Raised the body of Judas Iscariot,
And carried it away.

And as he bare it from the field
Its touch was cold as ice,
And the ivory teeth within the jaw
Rattled aloud, like dice.

As the soul of Judas Iscariot
Carried its load with pain,
The Eye of Heaven, like a lanthorn's eye,
Opened and shut again.

Half he walk'd, and half he seem'd
Lifted on the cold wind ;
He did not turn, for chilly hands
Were pushing from behind.

The first place that he came unto
It was the open wold,
And underneath were prickly whins,
And a wind that blew so cold.

The next place that he came unto
It was a stagnant pool,
And when he threw the body in
It floated light as wool.

He drew the body on his back,
And it was dripping chill,
And the next place he came unto
Was a Cross upon a hill.

A Cross upon the windy hill,
And a cross on either side,
Three skeletons that swing thereon,
Who had been crucified.

And on the middle cross bar sat
A white Dove slumbering ;
Dim it sat in the dim light,
With its head beneath its wing.

And underneath the middle cross
A grave yawn'd wide and vast,
But the soul of Judas Iscariot
Shiver'd, and glided past.

The fourth place that he came unto
It was the Brig of Dread,
And the great torrents rushing down
Were deep, and swift, and red.

He dared not fling the body in
For fear of faces dim,
And arms were waved in the wild water
To thrust it back to him.

'Twas the soul of Judas Iscariot
Turned from the Brig of Dread,
And the dreadful foam of the wild water
Had splashed the body red.

For days and nights he wandered on,
Upon an open plain,
And the days went by like blinding mist,
And the nights like rushing rain.

For days and nights he wandered on,
All thro' the Wood of Woe;
And the nights went by like moaning wind,
And the days like drifting snow.

'Twas the soul of Judas Iscariot
Came with a weary face—
Alone, alone, and all alone,
Alone in a lonely place!

He wandered east, he wandered west,
And heard no human sound;
For months and years, in grief and tears,
He wandered round and round.

For months and years, in grief and tears,
He walked the silent night;
Then the soul of Judas Iscariot
Perceived a far-off light.

A far-off light across the waste,
As dim as dim might be,
That came and went like the lighthouse gleam
On a black night at sea.

'Twas the soul of Judas Iscariot
Crawl'd to the distant gleam;
And the rain came down, and the rain was blown
Against him with a scream.

For days and nights he wandered on,
Push'd on by hands behind ;
And the days went by like black, black rain,
And the nights like rushing wind.

'Twas the soul of Judas Iscariot,
Strange, and sad, and tall
Stood all alone at dead of night
Before a lighted hall.

And the wold was white with snow,
And his foot-marks black and damp,
And the ghost of the silvern Moon arose,
Holding her yellow lamp.

And the icicles were on the eaves,
And the walls were deep with white,
And the shadows of the guests within
Pass'd on the window light.

The shadows of the wedding guests
Did strangely come and go,
And the body of Judas Iscariot
Lay stretch'd along the snow.

The body of Judas Iscariot
Lay stretched along the snow ;
'Twas the soul of Judas Iscariot
Ran swiftly to and fro.

To and fro, and up and down,
He ran so swiftly there,
As round and round the frozen pole
Glideth the lean white bear.

'Twas the Bridegroom sat at the table-head,
And the lights burnt bright and clear—
'Oh, who is that,' the Bridegroom said,
'Whose weary feet I hear?'

'Twas one looked from the lighted hall,
And answered soft and slow,
'It is a wolf runs up and down
With a black track in the snow.'

The Bridegroom in his robe of white
Sat at the table-head—
'Oh, who is that who moans without?'
The blessèd Bridegroom said.

'Twas one looked from the lighted hall,
And answered fierce and low,
'Tis the soul of Judas Iscariot
Gliding to and fro.'

'Twas the soul of Judas Iscariot
Did hush itself and stand,
And saw the Bridegroom at the door
With a light in his hand.

The Bridegroom stood in the open door,
And he was clad in white,
And far within the Lord's Supper
Was spread so broad and bright.

The Bridegroom shaded his eyes and look'd,
And his face was bright to see—
'What dost thou here at the Lord's Supper
With thy body's sins?' said he.

'Twas the soul of Judas Iscariot
Stood black, and sad, and bare—

'I have wandered many nights and days ;
There is no light elsewhere.'

'Twas the wedding guests cried out within,
And their eyes were fierce and bright—
'Scourge the soul of Judas Iscariot
Away into the night !'

The Bridegroom stood in the open door,
And he waved hands still and slow,
And the third time that he waved his hands
The air was thick with snow.

And of every flake of falling snow,
Before it touched the ground,
There came a dove, and a thousand doves
Made sweet sound.

'Twas the body of Judas Iscariot
Floated away full fleet,
And the wings of the doves that bare it off
Were like its winding-sheet.

'Twas the Bridegroom stood at the open door,
And beckon'd, smiling sweet ;
'Twas the soul of Judas Iscariot
Stole in, and fell at his feet.

'The Holy Supper is spread within,
And the many candles shine,
And I have waited long for thee
Before I poured the wine !'

The supper wine is poured at last,
The lights burn bright and fair,
Iscariot washes the Bridegroom's feet
And dries them with his hair.

IV.

THE FAËRY REAPER.

(IRELAND.)

'TIS on Eilanowen,
 There's laughter nightly !
For the Fays are sowing
 Their golden grain :
It springs by moonlight
 So stilly and brightly,
And it drinks no sunlight,
 Or silver rain ;—
Tho' the shoots upcreeping
 No man may see,
When men are reaping
 It reapt must be ;
But to reap it rightly,
 With sickle keen,
They must lead there nightly
 A pure colleen !

Yes, pure completely
 Must be that maiden,
Just feeling sweetly
 Her love's first dream.
Should one steal thither
 With evil laden,
The crop would wither
 In the pale moon's beam !
For midnights seven,
 While all men sleep,
'Neath the silent heaven
 The maid must reap ;

And the sweeter and whiter
Of soul is she,
The better and brighter
Will that harvest be !

. . . In Lough Bawn's bosom
The isle is lying,
Like a bright green blossom
On a maiden's breast—
There the water-eagle *
O'erhead is flying,
And beneath the sea-gull
Doth build its nest.
And across the water
A farm gleams fair,
And the farmer's daughter
Dwelt lonely there :—
And on Eilanowen
She'd sit and sing,
When the Fays were sowing
Their seeds in spring.

She could not hear them,
Nor see them peeping ;
Tho' she wandered near them
The spring-tide thro',
When the grouse was crowing,
The trout was leaping,
And with hare-bells blowing
The banks were blue.
But not by moonlight
She dared to stay,

* The Osprey (*Pandion*).

Only by sunlight
She went that way.
And on Eilanowen
They walked each night,
Her footprints sowing
With lilies white !

When the sun above her
Was brightly blazing,
She'd bare (God love her !)
Each round white limb.
Unseen, unnoted,
Save fay-folk gazing,
Dark hair'd, white throated,
She'd strip to swim !
Out yonder blushing
A space she'd stand,
Then falter flushing
Across the strand,—
Till the bright still water
Would sparkle sweet,
As it kissed and caught her
From neck to feet !

There, sparkling round her
With fond caresses,
It clasp'd her, crowned her,
My maiden fair.
Then, brighter glowing
From its crystal kisses,
The bright drops flowing
From her dripping hair,
Outleaping, running
Beneath the sky,

The bright light sunning
Her limbs, she'd fly,—
And 'mid tinkling laughter
Of elfin bowers,
The Fays ran after
With leaves and flowers !

Could the Fays behold her,
Nor long to gain her ?
From foot to shoulder
None pure as she !
They cried, " God keep her,
No sorrow stain her !
The Faëry Reaper
In troth she'll be ! " . . .
With stalks of amber
And silvern ears,
From earth's dark chamber
The grain appears.
'Tis harvest weather !
The moon swims high !
And they flock together
With elfin cry !

Now, long and truly
I'd loved that maiden ;
And served her duly
With kiss and sign ;
And that same season
My soul love-laden
Had found new reason
To wish her mine.
For her cheek grew paler,
Her laughter less,

And what might ail her
I could not guess.
Each harvest morrow
We kissing met,
And with weary sorrow
Her eyes seem'd wet.

" Oh, speak, *Mavourneen*,
What ails ye nightly ?
For sure each morning
'Tis sad ye seem !"
Her eyes not weeping
Looked on me brightly :—
" Each night when sleeping
I dream a Dream.
'Tis on Eilanowen
I seem to be,
And bright grain growing
I surely see ;
A golden sickle
My fingers keep,
And my slow tears trickle
On what I reap !

" The moon is gleaming,
The faeries gather,
Like glow-worms gleaming,
Their eyes flash quick ;
I try while reaping
To name ' Our Father !'
But round me leaping
They pinch and prick—
On the stalks of amber,
On the silvern ears,

They cling, they clamber,
 Till day appears !
 And here I'm waking
 In bed, once more,
 My bones all aching,
 My heart full sore ! ”

I kissed her, crying
 “ God bless your reaping !
 For sure no sighing
 Can set you free.
 They'll bless your wedding
 Who vex your sleeping ;
 So do their bidding,
Ma cushla chree !
 But oh, remember !
 Your fate is cast,
 And ere December
 Hath fairly past,
 The Faëry Reaper
 Must be a Bride,
 Or a sad cold sleeper
 On the green hill-side ! ”

“ Sure wedding's better
 Than dying sadly ! ”
 She smiled, and set her
 Soft hand in mine.
 For three nights after
 She labour'd gladly,
 'Mid fairy laughter,
 And did not pine ;
 And when the seven
 Long nights were run,

Full well 'neath Heaven
That work was done :
Their sheaves were slanted,
Their harvest made,
And no more they wanted
A mortal's aid.

'Tis on Eilanowen
There's laughter nightly,
When the Fays are sowing
Their golden grain !
God bless that laughter ;
That grain blow brightly !
For luck came after
My Mary's pain.
And when sweet Mary
Was wed to me,
Sure the folk of faëry
Were there to see :—
The white board spreading,
Unheard, unseen,
They blest the wedding
Of a pure colleen !



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The poets and the poetry
of the nineteenth century

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